



REI HIROE

Volume 12 is out! Yes!
I've become such a sauna freak recently.
All I wanna do is get in the sauna.



Rei Hiroe was born on December 5, 1972. After working at a game company, he debuted as a mangaka in 1993. He has been an active illustrator and dojinshi, and has created many titles released through the dojin community. He is best known for his works *Hisuikyoukitan* and *SHOOK UP!* (both currently available in new formats published by Shogakukan) and his first artwork collection, *Barrage*.

BLACK LAGOON

012

BLACK LAGOON
VOL. 12

VIZ Signature Edition

Story and Art by
REI HIROE

BLACK LAGOON Vol. 12
by Rei HIROE

© 2003 Rei HIROE
All rights reserved.

Original Japanese edition published by SHOGAKUKAN.
English translation rights in the United States of America,
Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and New
Zealand arranged with SHOGAKUKAN.

Original Cover Design: Mikiyo KOBAYASHI + Bay Bridge Studio

Translation/Joe Yamazaki

Touch-Up Art & Lettering/John Hunt, Primary Graphix
Design/Kam Li

Editor/Mike Montesa

The stories, characters, and incidents mentioned in
this publication are entirely fictional.

No portion of this book may be reproduced or
transmitted in any form or by any means without
written permission from the copyright holders.

A Hard Day's Night

Words and Music by John Lennon and Paul McCartney
Copyright © 1964 Sony Music Publishing (US) LLC
and MPL Communications, Inc. in the United States

Copyright Renewed

All Rights for the world excluding the United States
Administered by Sony Music Publishing (US) LLC, 424
Church Street, Suite 1200, Nashville, TN 37219
International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved
Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard LLC

Printed in Canada

Published by VIZ Media, LLC
P.O. Box 77010
San Francisco, CA 94107

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
First printing, August 2022

VIZ SIGNATURE
vizsignature.com

VIZ MEDIA
viz.com



PARENTAL ADVISORY

BLACK LAGOON is rated M for Mature and is recommended
for mature readers. This volume contains graphic violence,
strong language, nudity, adult situations, drinkin', smokin',
ass-kickin', law breakin', gun-love, running with scissors, and
just about everything your mother ever told you not to do.

BLACK LAGOON



STORY & ART BY
REI HIROE

012



Dutch

SKIPPER OF THE *BLACK LAGOON* AND LEADER OF THE CREW. DUTCH STAYS COOL NO MATTER HOW BAD THINGS GET. HIS BACKGROUND INCLUDES MILITARY SERVICE, INCLUDING A TOUR IN VIETNAM.

Benny

THE MAN IN CHARGE OF THE HIGH-TECH ELECTRONICS ONBOARD THE *BLACK LAGOON*. BENNY ESCAPED FROM THE US AND IS ON THE RUN FROM THE FBI AND THE MAFIA.

Crew of the Black Lagoon

Rock

A FORMER JAPANESE SALARYMAN WHOSE REAL NAME IS ROKURO OKAJIMA. ABANDONED BY HIS COMPANY AFTER THE CREW OF THE *BLACK LAGOON* ABDUCTED HIM, ROCK LATER JOINED HIS CAPTORS.

Revy

THE *BLACK LAGOON*'S TOP GUNSLINGER, NICKNAMED "TWO HAND." HER FOUL MOUTH AND EXTREMELY SHORT FUSE USUALLY GET HER IN LOTS OF TROUBLE.

STORY

ROCK, A.K.A. ROKURO OKAJIMA, A JAPANESE SALARYMAN, IS ABDUCTED BY A BAND OF SMUGGLERS WHILE ON A BUSINESS TRIP IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. ABANDONED BY HIS COMPANY, HE TAKES ON THE NAME 'ROCK' AND FINDS A NEW JOB IN THE SHADY SMUGGLING TRADE.

ROCK'S AWAKENING AS A TRUE CRIMINAL CAME TO A BITTER END AFTER ROBERTA'S SECOND VISIT TO ROANAPUR. ALTHOUGH ROCK WAS FRUSTRATED, SAVING FENG—a CHINESE SPY ATTEMPTING TO INFILTRATE JANE'S HACKER GROUP—HELPED ROCK RECONFIRM HIS TRUE SELF.

Balalaika

A FORMER CAPTAIN IN THE RED ARMY AND BOSS OF "HOTEL MOSCOW," A RUSSIAN CRIMINAL GANG.



Chang

HONG KONG TRIAD BOSS.



Shenhua

A FREELANCE ASSASSIN KNOWN AS THE "CHINGLISH GAL."



Feng

FORMER SPY FOR THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY WHO FAILED TO INFILTRATE JANE'S ORGANIZATION. JOINED RONNIE'S ORGANIZATION WITH HELP FROM ROCK.

Ronnie

A MEMBER OF THE SICILIAN MAFIA.



BLACK LAGOON

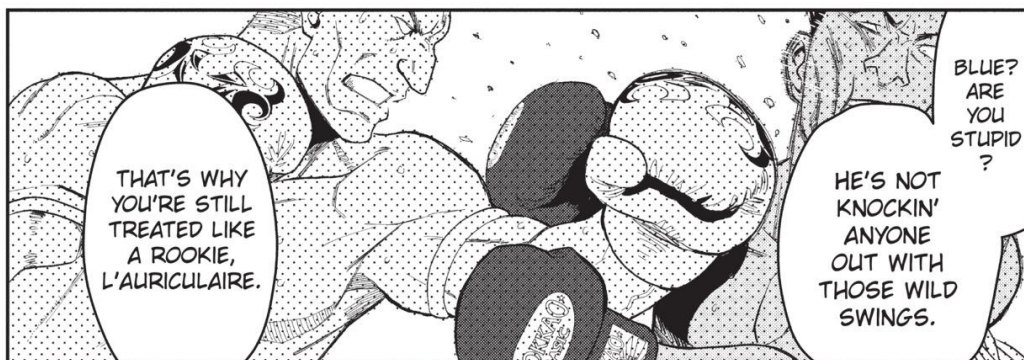


STORY & ART BY

REI HIROE

012

Chapter 78: L'Homme Sombre Pt. 1	007
Chapter 79: L'Homme Sombre Pt. 2	027
Chapter 80: L'Homme Sombre Pt. 3	047
Chapter 81: L'Homme Sombre Pt. 4	065
Chapter 82: L'Homme Sombre Pt. 5	083
Chapter 83: L'Homme Sombre Pt. 6	101
Chapter 84: L'Homme Sombre Pt. 7	119
Chapter 85: L'Homme Sombre Pt. 8	137





LEMME
LISTEN, LE
MAJEUR.

STILL
LISTENING
TO THAT
LAME
SONG?



OH, PALE
BLUE
RAIN...

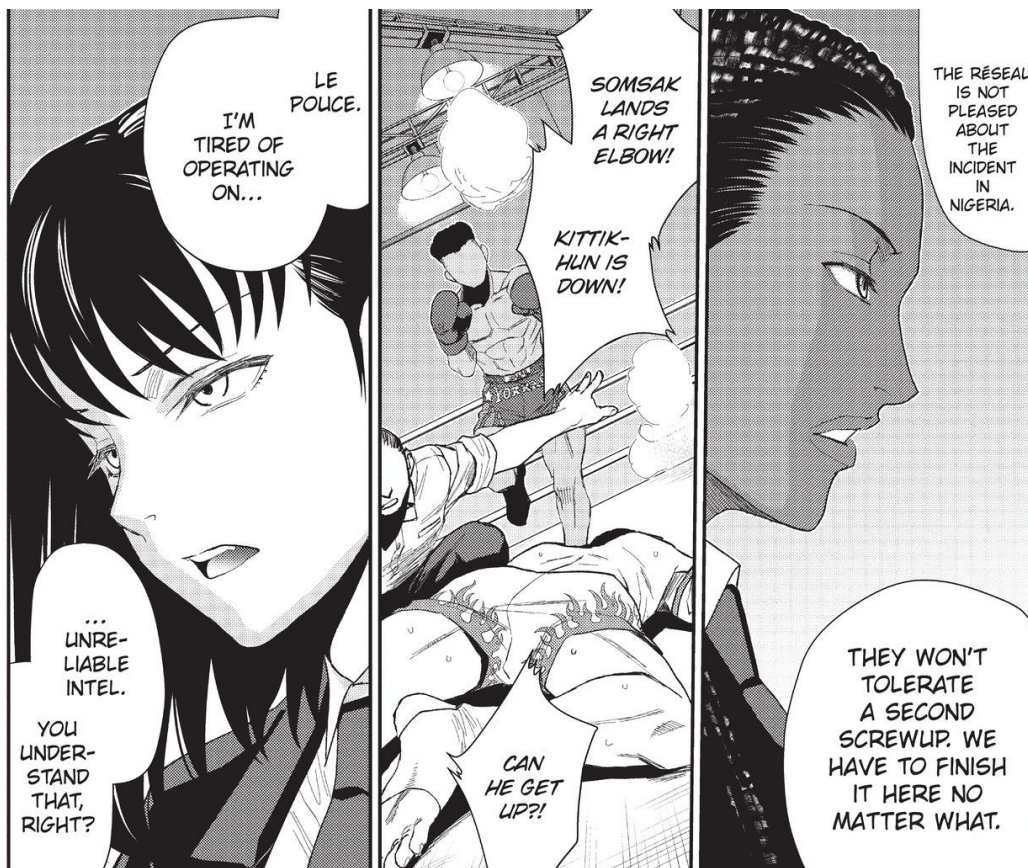
KEEPS
FALLING
AS IT
EMBRACES
MY
SHOULDER
...

WASHING
AWAY THE
SHAPE
OF LOVE
WITHOUT A
TRACE...

#78 L'Homme Sombre Pt. 1









WE'RE
STICKING
TO THE
PLAN...

...LE
MAJEUR.



HEY.

I CAN
SIT HERE
AND DRINK
BEER ALL
NIGHT FOR
ALL I CARE.

SO
ARE WE
DOING
THIS, OR
WHAT?



BUT IF
YOU WANT
TO GO
THROUGH
WITH IT, LE
POUCE, BE
MY GUEST.

ONCE WE
START,
THERE'S
NO BACKING
OUT. I'M
AGAINST
IT.



YOU GOT
IT WRONG.
I'M TALKING
ABOUT THE
GUY UP
THERE.

GO TAKE
CARE OF IT
ALREADY,
LE MAJEUR.

GO TO
HELL.



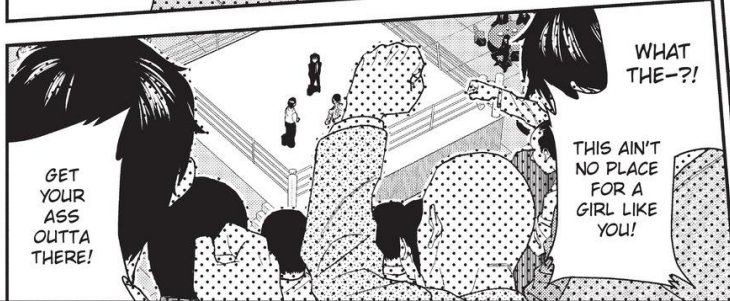
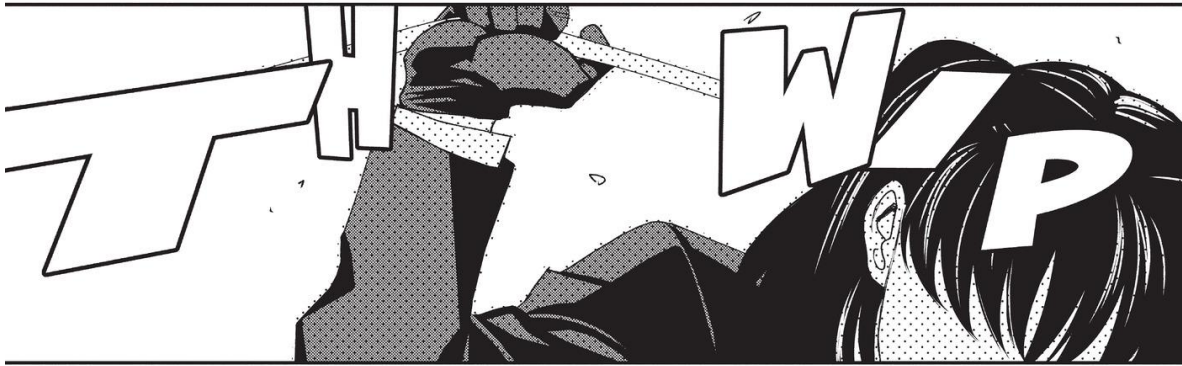
HUH?

WHAT'D
YOU SAY
TO ME?



OH, LE
MAJEUR.

ARE YOU NOT
ONLY NOT TALL
ENOUGH, BUT
SHORT ON
COURAGE
TOO?





LE MAJEUR
DEFTLY
DODGES
THEM
ALL!

SOMSAK
THROWS A
BARRAGE
OF
PUNCHES!

ONE WILD
SWING
AFTER
ANOTHER!







THE...

ZW



THE
WINNER
IS...

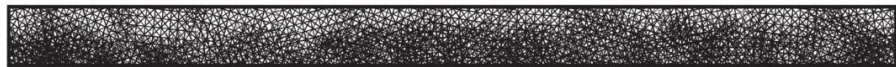
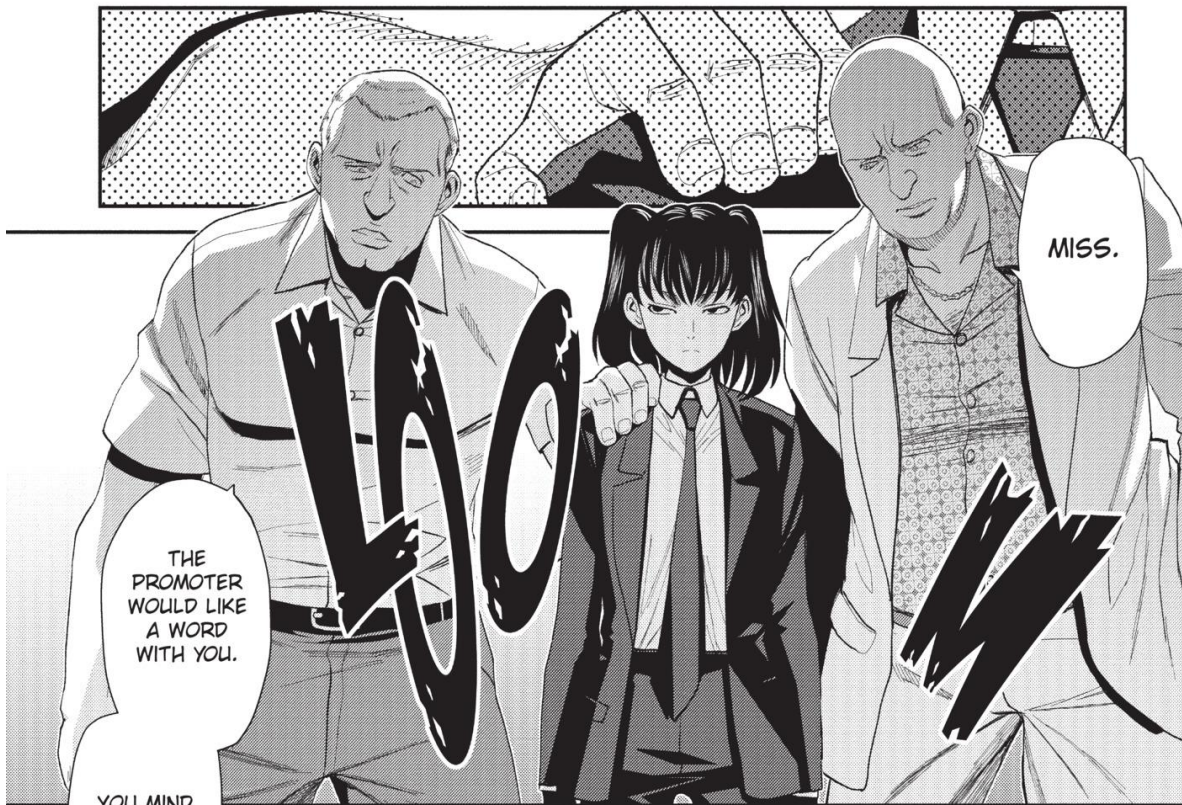


THIS
IS AN
UNPREC-
EDENTED
TURN OF
EVENTS!

THE
ENTIRE
ARENA IS
BOOING!

WHAT
AN
UPSET!

A GIRL FROM
THE CROWD
HAS KNOCKED
OUT THE
REIGNING
CHAMP JUST
AS SHE
PROMISED!

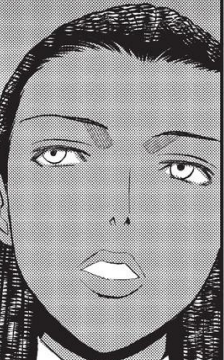


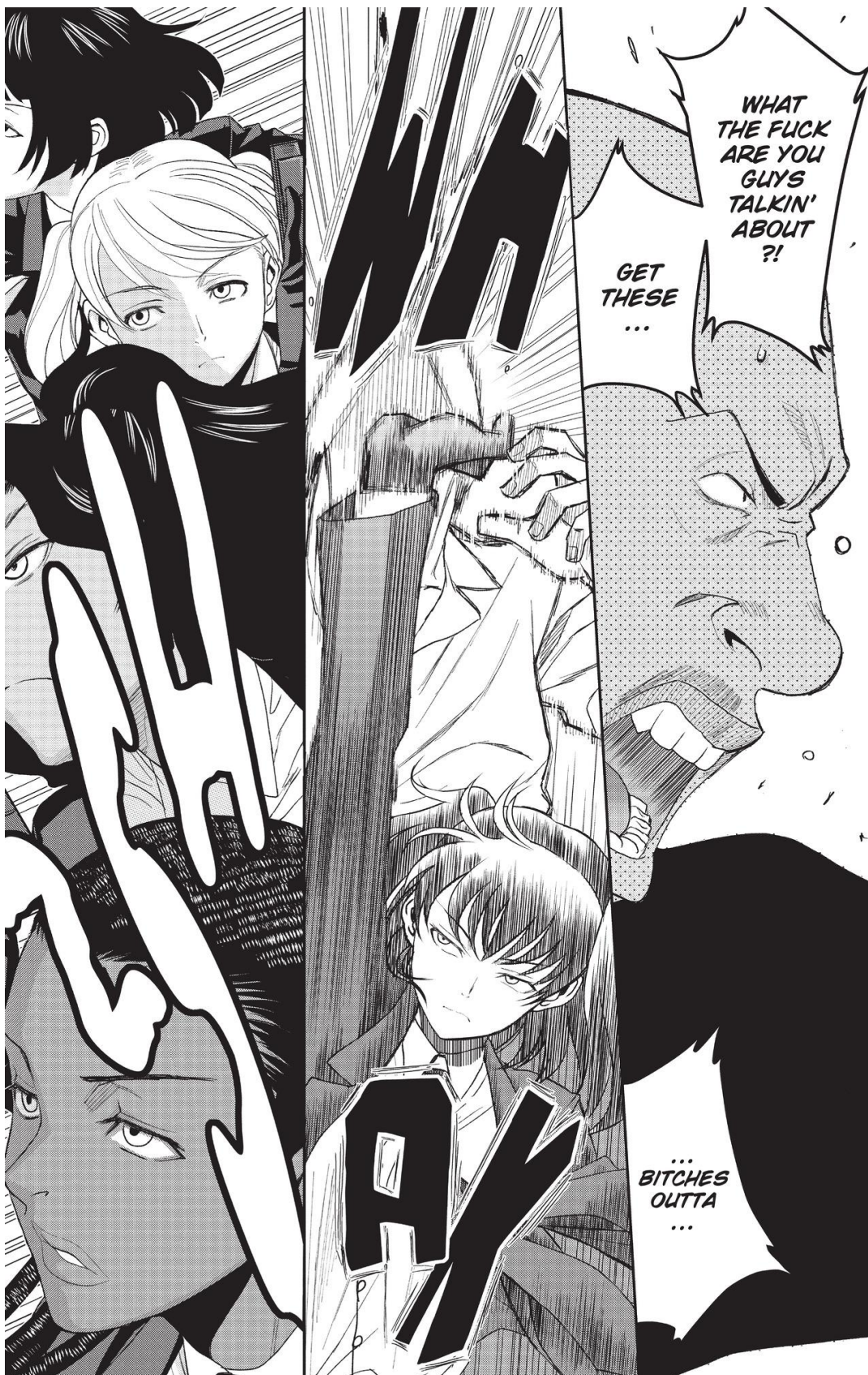








WHATEVER. LET'S JUST GET THIS DONE.  I ALREADY HAD MY DRINKS SO LET'S GET OUTTA THIS DUMP.	 HEY, C'MON. SHE CAN HANDLE THIS MANY BY HERSELF.	WHAT'S TAKIN' YOU SO LONG? THOUGHT YOU WOULD'VE TAKEN CARE OF IT BY NOW.  TOLD YOU SHE COULDN'T DO IT ALONE.	 DID HE TALK ? LE MAJEUR?
---	---	---	--



WHAT
THE FUCK
ARE YOU
GUYS
TALKIN'
ABOUT
?!

GET
THESE
...

...
BITCHES
OUTTA
...







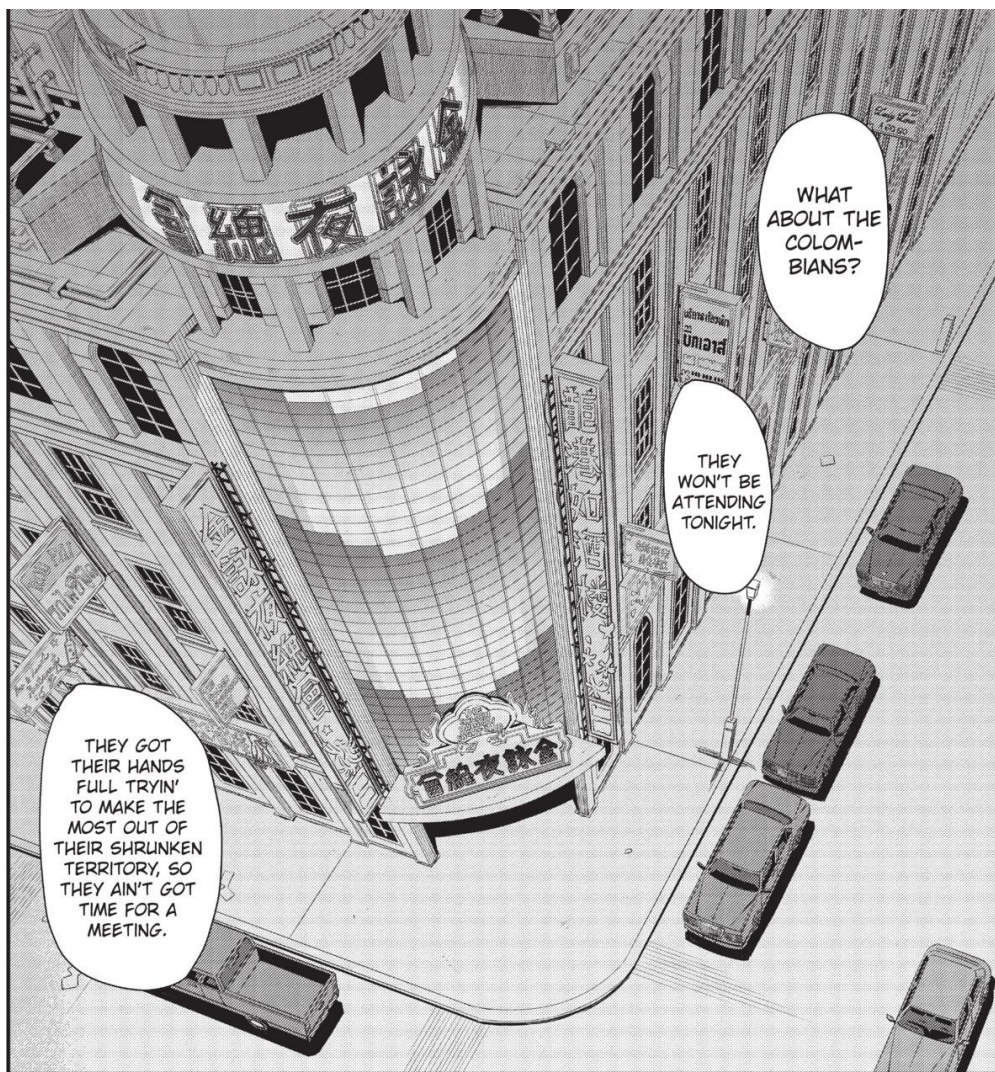
...
FINALLY,
SOME
PEACE AND
QUIET.



ALL RIGHT.
LET'S SEE
HOW LOOSE
YOUR LIPS
CAN GET,
SHALL WE?

HOPE
YOU'RE
READY
FOR IT...

...BIG
GUY.



#79 L'Homme Sombre Pt. 2





ALL THAT
VODKA
FINALLY
GET TO
YOUR
HEAD?

THE PIE'S
SHRINKING
FOR
EVERYBODY

THING'S ARE
TOUGH ALL
OVER. WOULD
BE NICE TO HEAR
SOME GOOD
NEWS FOR A
CHANGE.

DON'T
YOU
AGREE,
MR.
CHANG?

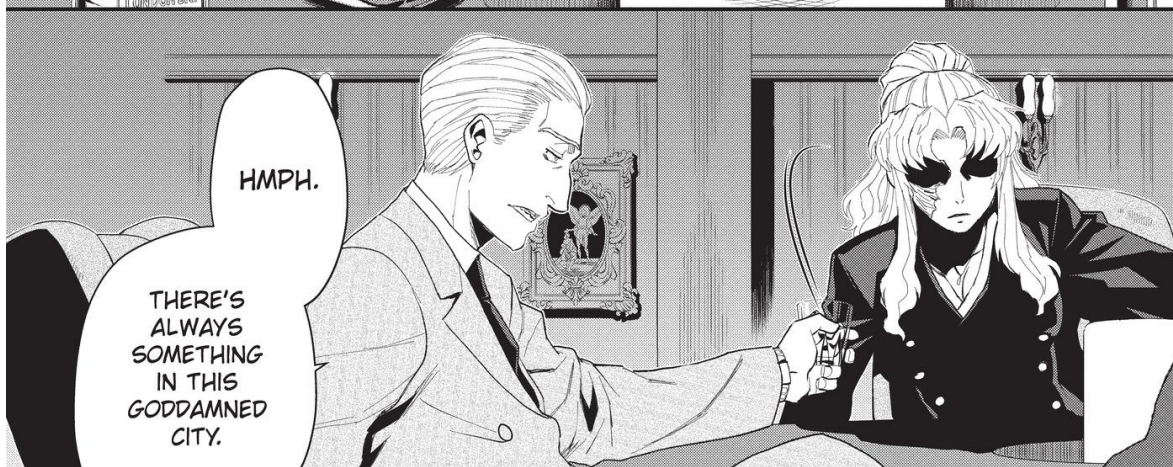


SUCH
VAGARIES
ARE THE
WAY OF
THINGS IN
OUR LINE
OF WORK.

IT COULD
HAPPEN TO
ANY OF US.

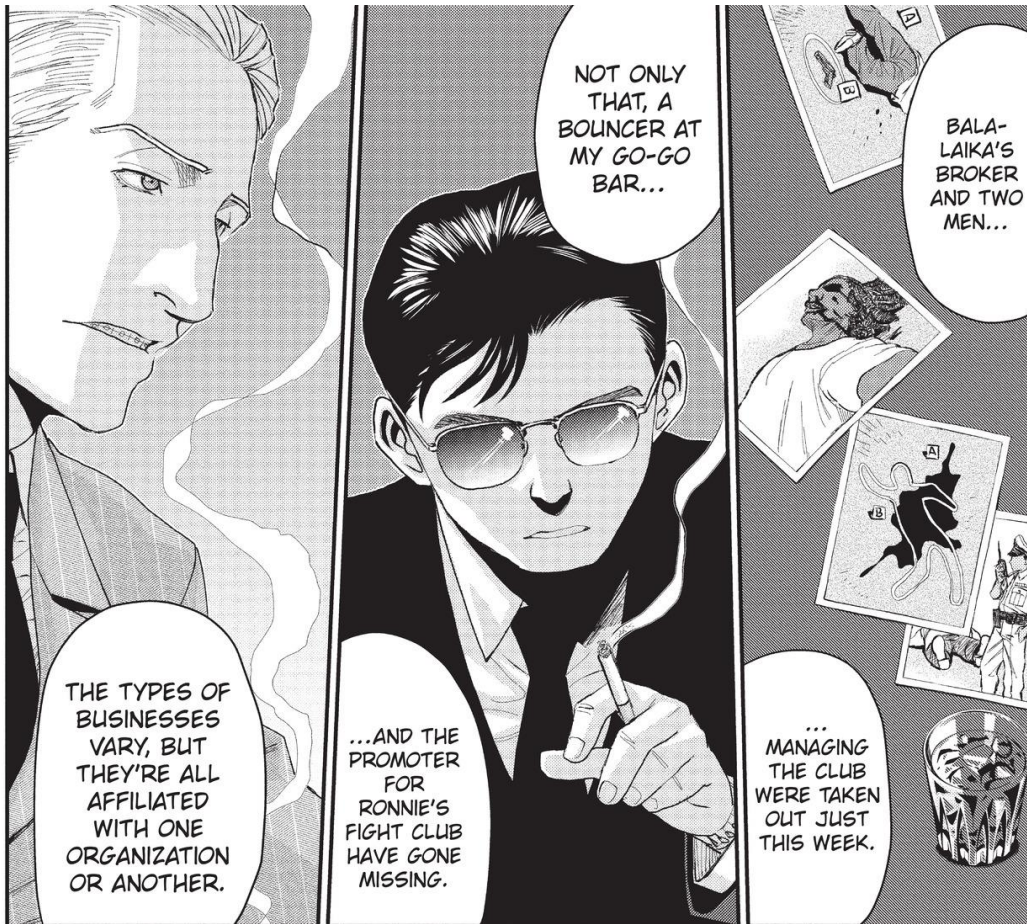
BUT
BITCHING
ABOUT IT
ISN'T WHY
WE'RE HERE

WE'RE HERE
TO DISCUSS
SOMETHING
THAT'S GONNA
MAKE OUR
DRINKS TASTE
A BIT MORE
BLOODY.



HMPH.

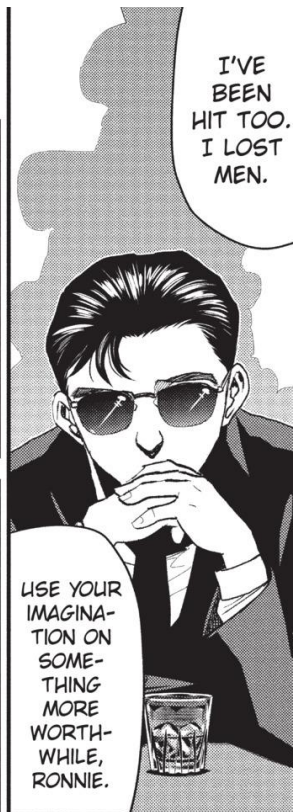
THERE'S
ALWAYS
SOMETHING
IN THIS
GODDAMNED
CITY.





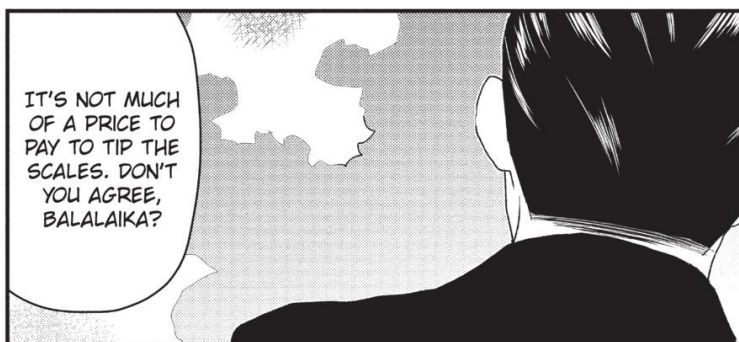
I DON'T
KNOW,
CHANG.

LACKEYS FOR
THIRD-TIER
OPERATIONS
ARE EASILY
REPLACEABLE.

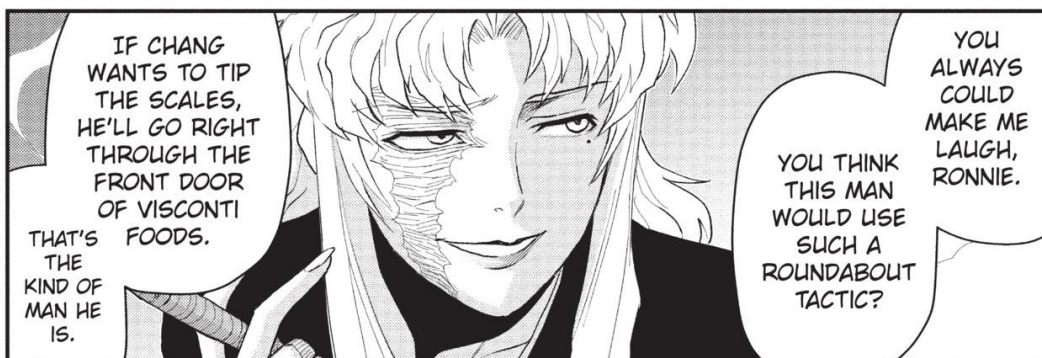


I'VE
BEEN
HIT TOO.
I LOST
MEN.

USE YOUR
IMAGINA-
TION ON
SOME-
THING
MORE
WORTH-
WHILE,
RONNIE.



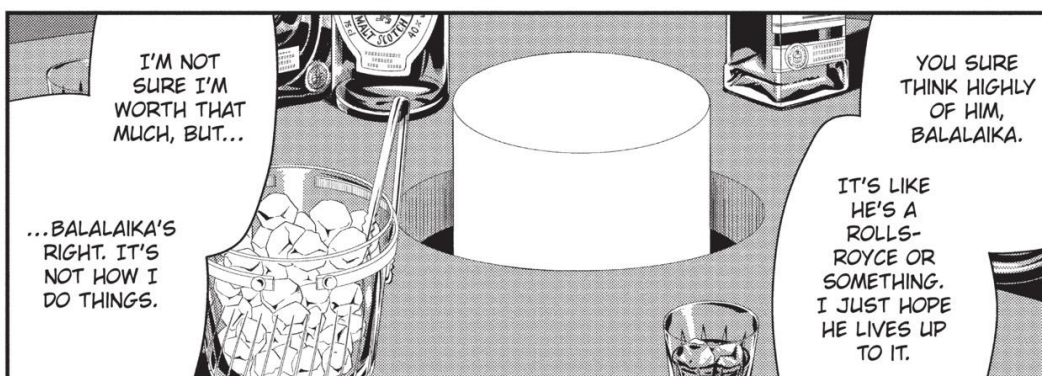
IT'S NOT MUCH
OF A PRICE TO
PAY TO TIP THE
SCALES. DON'T
YOU AGREE,
BALALAIKA?



IF CHANG
WANTS TO TIP
THE SCALES,
HE'LL GO RIGHT
THROUGH THE
FRONT DOOR
OF VISCONTI
FOODS.
THAT'S THE
KIND OF
MAN HE
IS.

YOU
ALWAYS
COULD
MAKE ME
LAUGH,
RONNIE.

YOU THINK
THIS MAN
WOULD USE
SUCH A
ROUNDAABOUT
TACTIC?

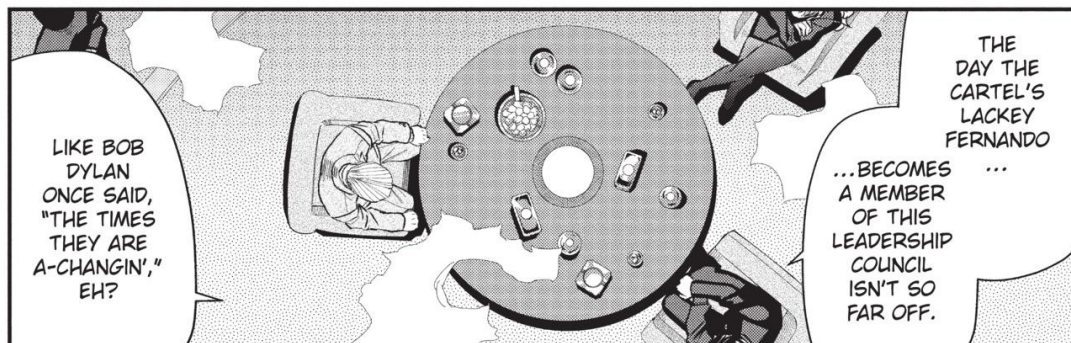


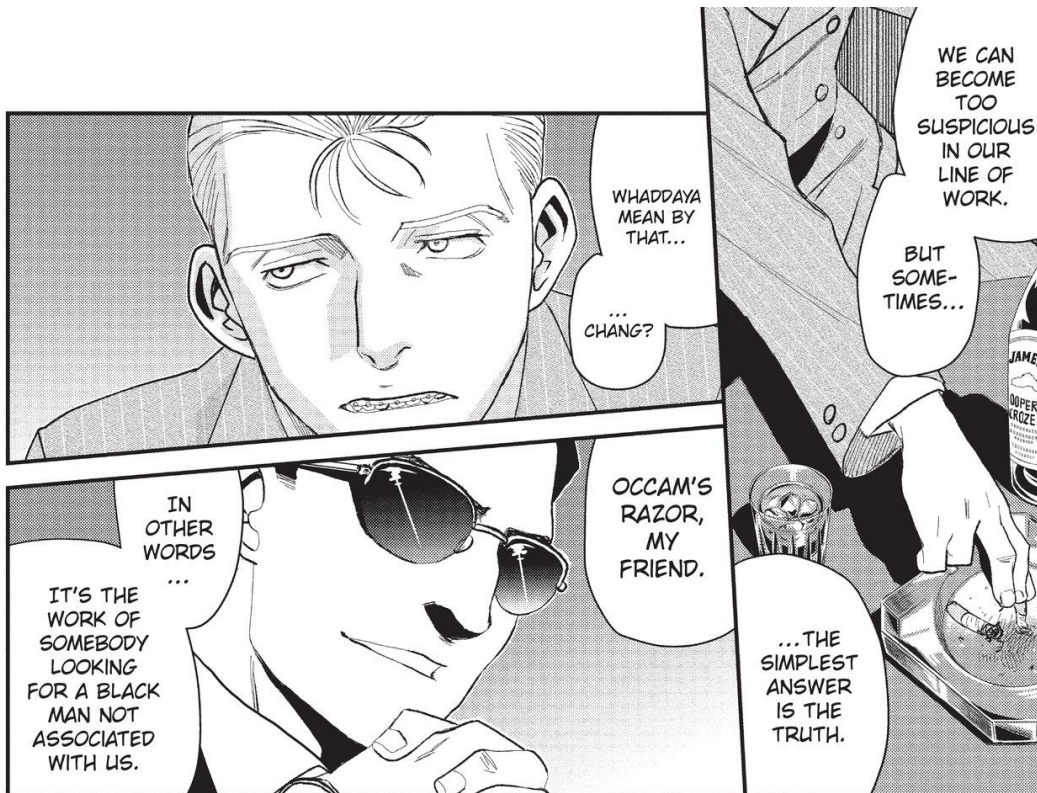
I'M NOT
SURE I'M
WORTH THAT
MUCH, BUT...

...BALALAIKA'S
RIGHT. IT'S
NOT HOW I
DO THINGS.

YOU SURE
THINK HIGHLY
OF HIM,
BALALAIKA.

IT'S LIKE
HE'S A
ROLLS-
ROYCE OR
SOMETHING.
I JUST HOPE
HE LIVES UP
TO IT.







WHAT'S
YOUR
PLAN?

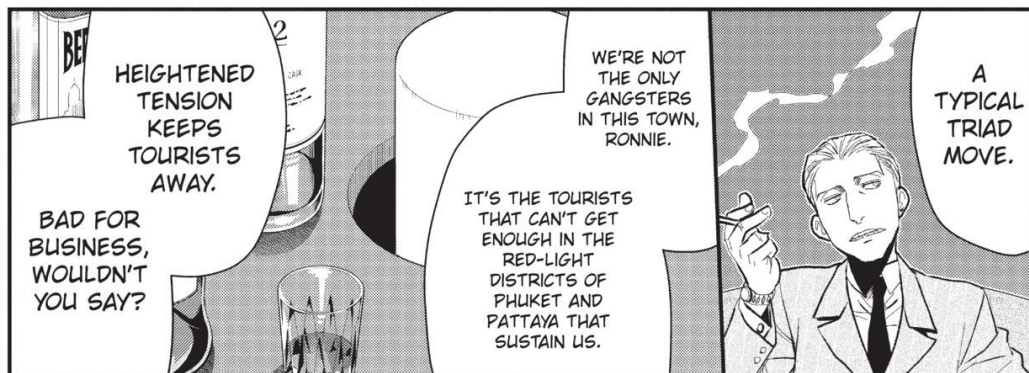
AND HOW ARE WE
GOING TO DOLE OUT
PUNISHMENT IF WE
DON'T KNOW WHO
WE'RE DEALING
WITH?

LET'S SUPPOSE
YOU'RE RIGHT.
I'VE GOT
PLENTY OF
PEOPLE THEY
COULD BE
TARGETING.



UNTIL
THEN, WE
WAIT.

THE ONLY
THING
WE CAN
DO RIGHT
NOW...
...IS SPREAD
THE WORD
AND WAIT
FOR THEM
TO BITE.



BAD FOR
BUSINESS,
WOULDN'T
YOU SAY?

HEIGHTENED
TENSION
KEEPS
TOURISTS
AWAY.

IT'S THE TOURISTS
THAT CAN'T GET
ENOUGH IN THE
RED-LIGHT
DISTRICTS OF
PHUKET AND
PATTAYA THAT
SUSTAIN US.

WE'RE NOT
THE ONLY
GANGSTERS
IN THIS TOWN,
RONNIE.

A
TYPICAL
TRIAD
MOVE.



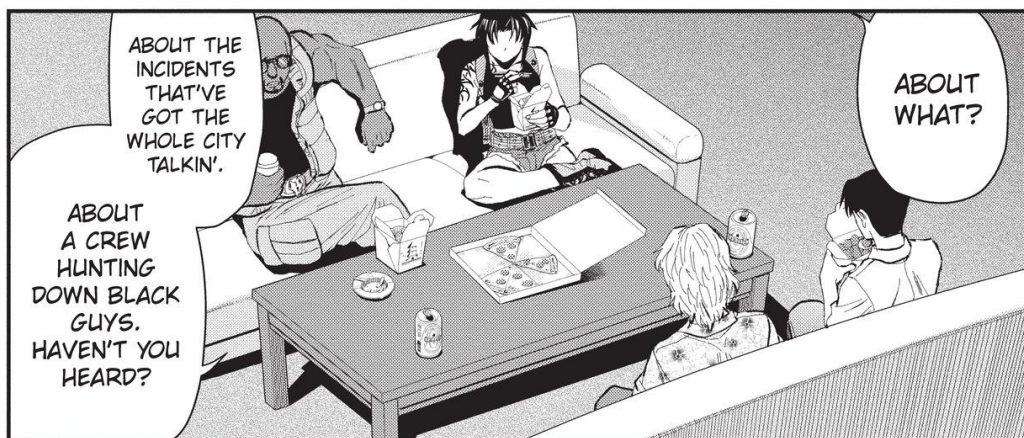
BEING AWAY
FROM THE
GAMBLING
DENS GOT
YOU FEELING
LIKE YOU'RE
RETIRED?

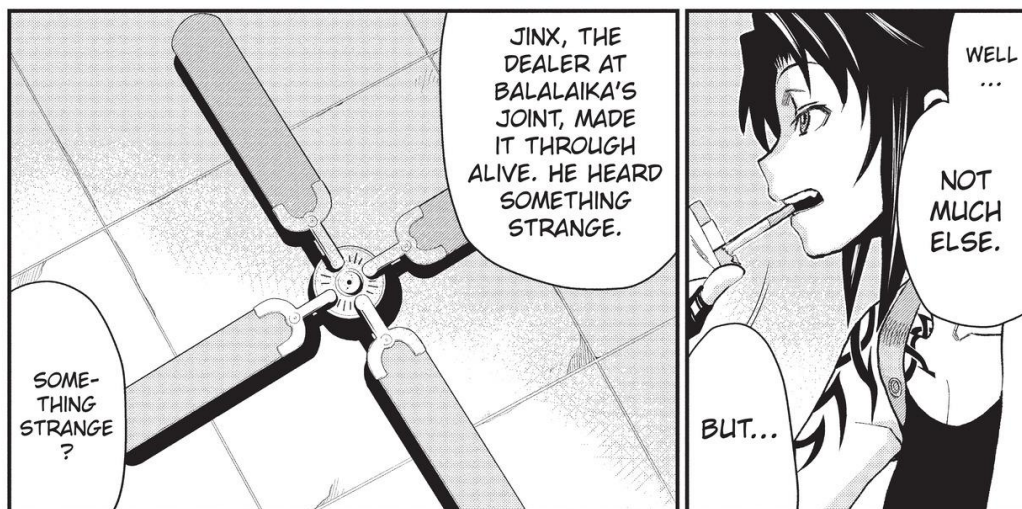
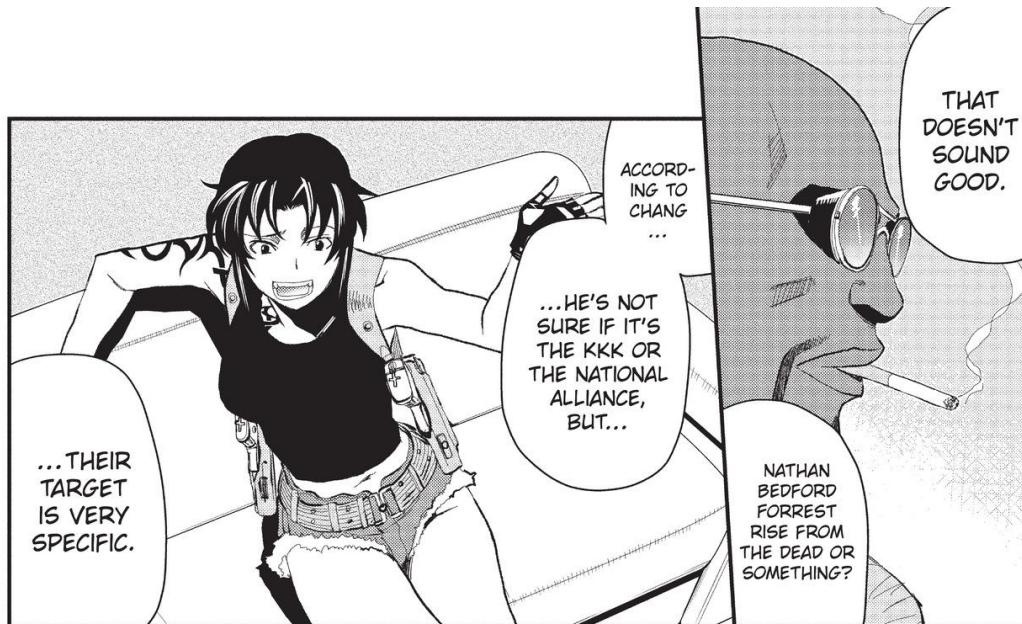
WHAT'S
GOTTEN
INTO YOU,
RUSSKI?

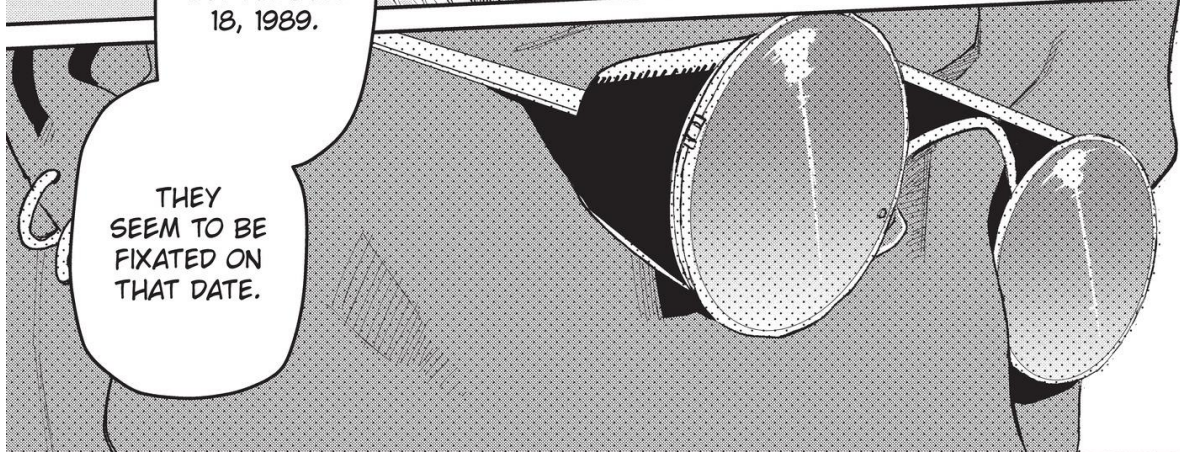
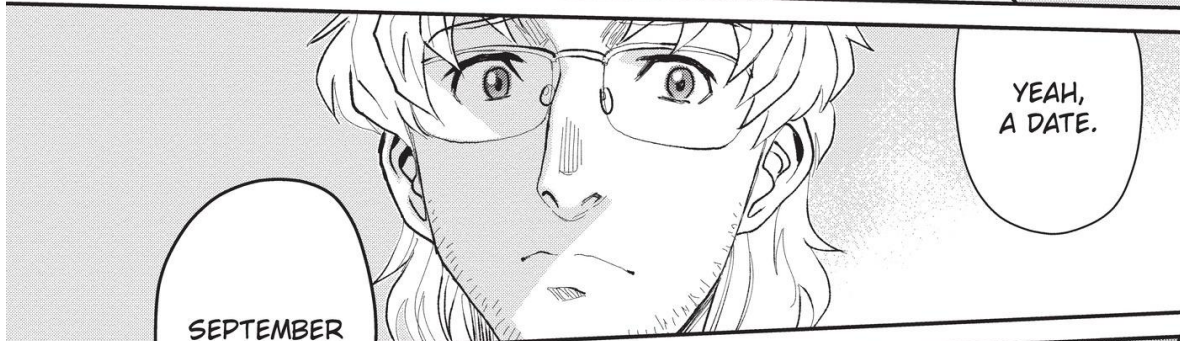
IT'S NOT
SMART TO HAVE
YOUR GOONS
WANDERING
AROUND WHEN
WE DON'T EVEN
KNOW WHO
WE'RE DEALING
WITH.

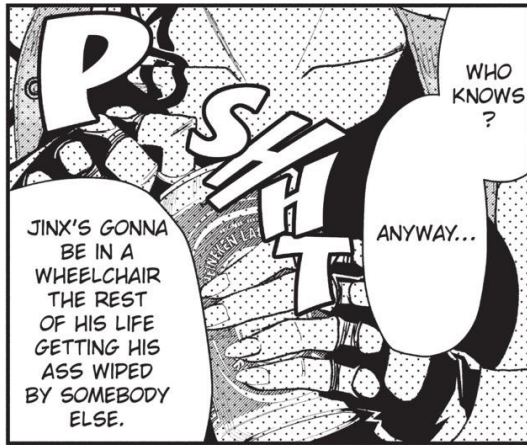
I
AGREE
WITH
CHANG.

I CAN
SEND OUT
A HIT
SQUAD
RIGHT
NOW.
GET THE
JOB
DONE
QUICK.

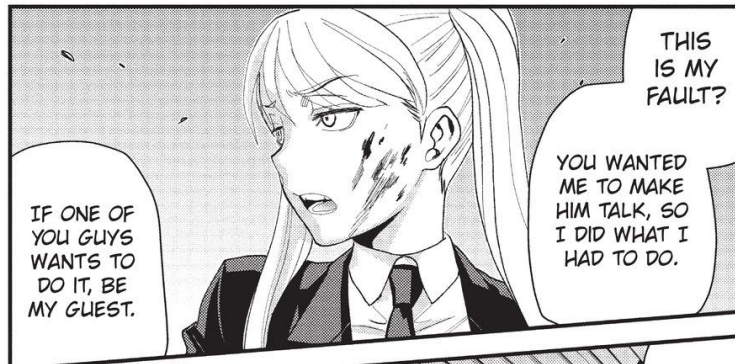












IF ONE OF
YOU GUYS
WANTS TO
DO IT, BE
MY GUEST.

THIS
IS MY
FAULT?

YOU WANTED
ME TO MAKE
HIM TALK, SO
I DID WHAT I
HAD TO DO.



...THERE'LL
BE A LONG
LINE OF
MOURNERS
AT THE
FUNERAL.

WHAT
DO YOU
WANT
TO DO?

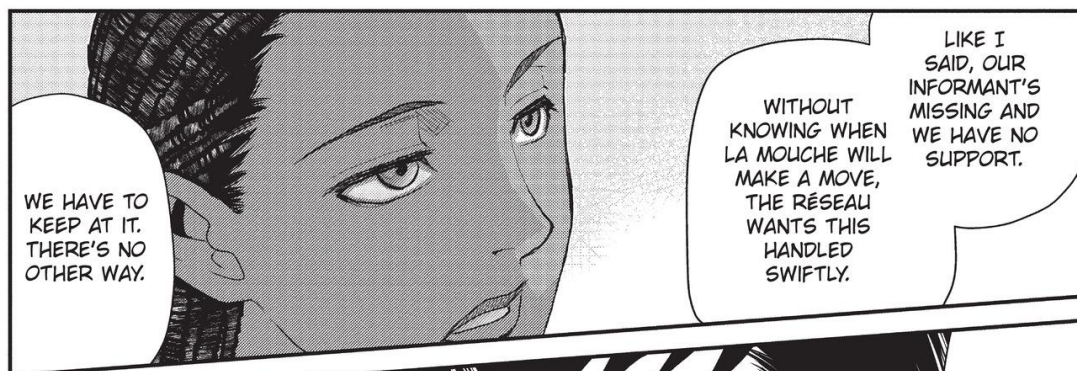
HEY, LE
POLICE.

IF WE
KEEP
THIS UP...



YOU
NEED TO
BACK IT
OFF,
L'AURI-
CULAIRE.

YOU GOTTA
GIVE THEM
A CHANCE
TO TALK.



WE HAVE TO
KEEP AT IT.
THERE'S NO
OTHER WAY.

WITHOUT
KNOWING WHEN
LA MOUCHE WILL
MAKE A MOVE,
THE RÉSEAU
WANTS THIS
HANDLED
SWIFTLY.

LIKE I
SAID, OUR
INFORMANT'S
MISSING AND
WE HAVE NO
SUPPORT.

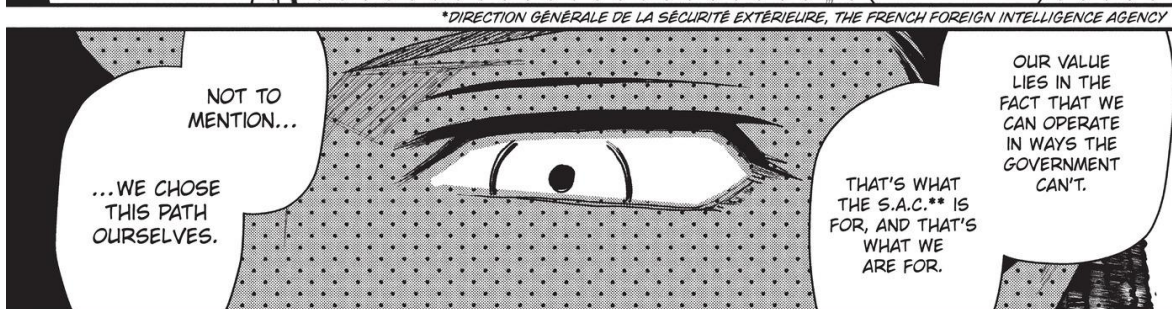


CALL IN SOME
HELP. AT THE
VERY LEAST, WE
NEED A RELIABLE
INFORMANT.
OTHERWISE...

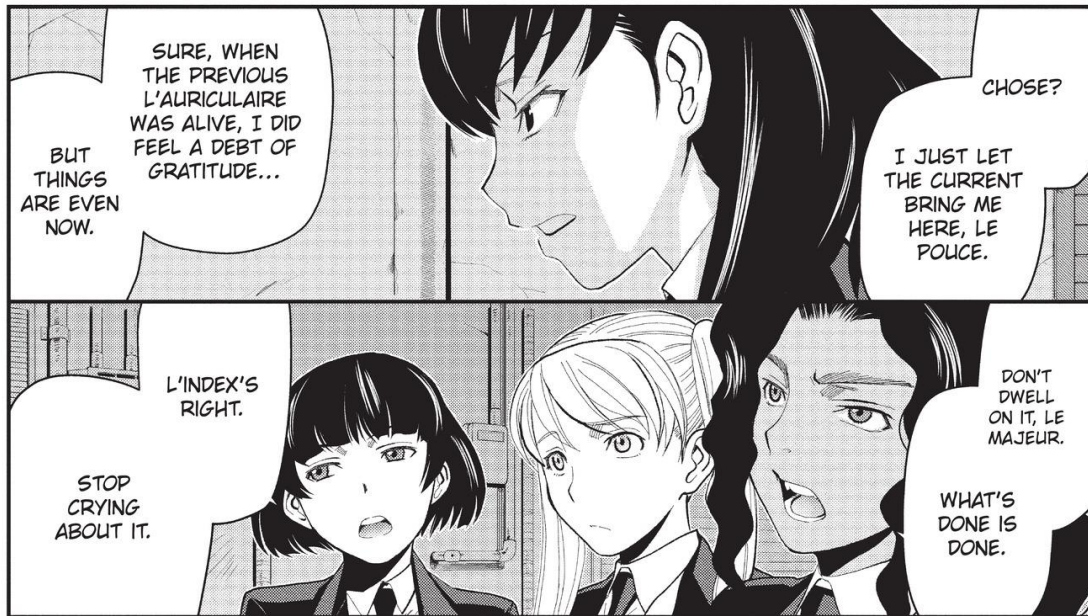
...ONE
OF US
WILL DIE
AGAIN.

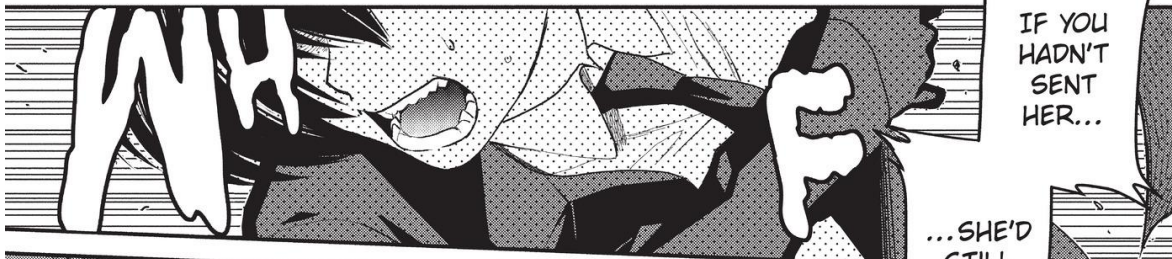
LE
POLICE...

...I GET THE
FEELING OUR
HEADS ARE
STUCK IN A
CHAMBER POT
JUST LIKE IN
NIGERIA.



** SERVICE D'ACTION CIVIQUE, A FRENCH INTELLIGENCE AGENCY





IF YOU
HADN'T
SENT
HER...



...SHE'D
STILL
BE...

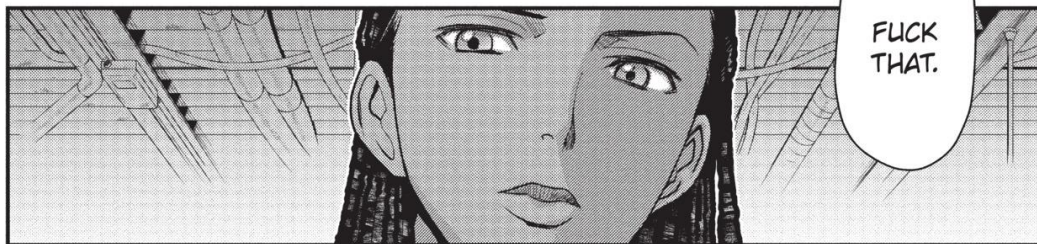
LOWER
YOUR
WEAPON...



...LE
MAJEUR.





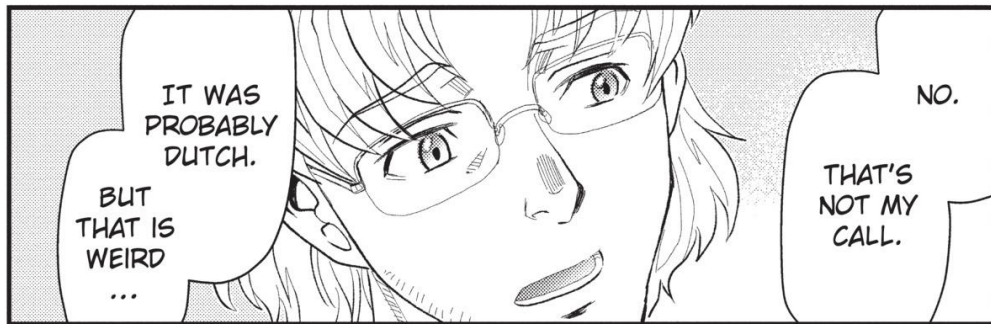


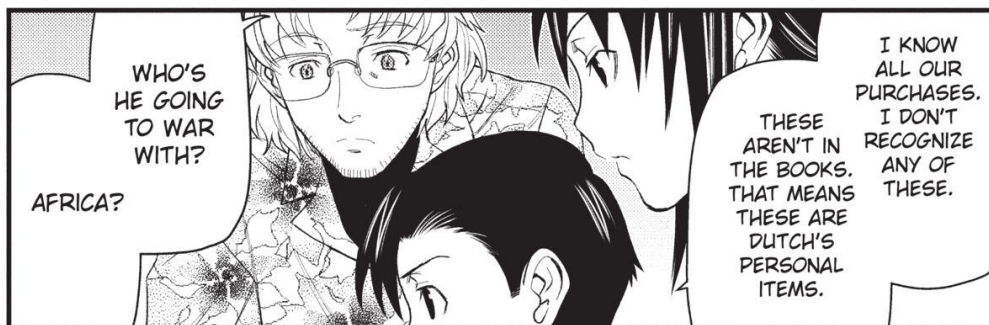
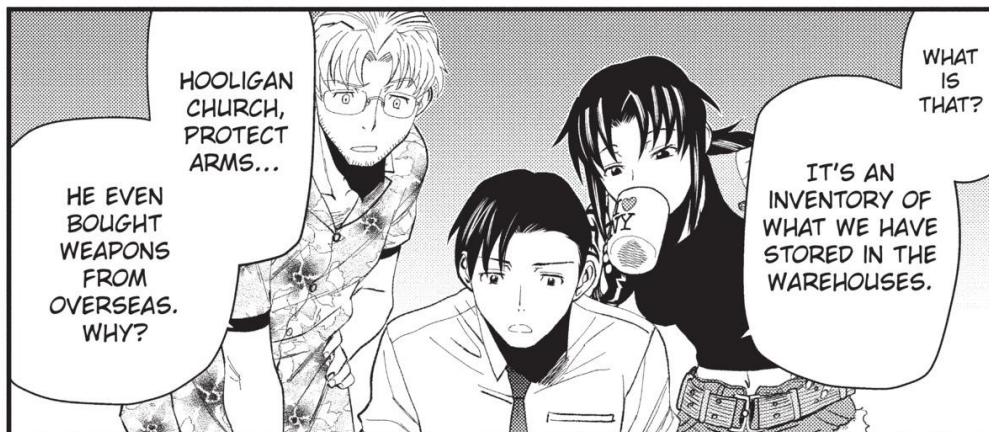
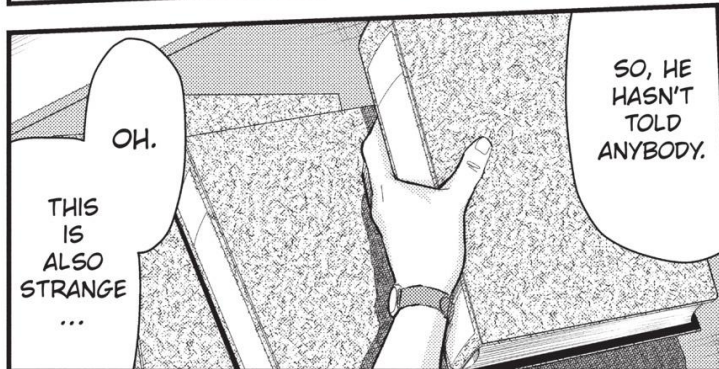
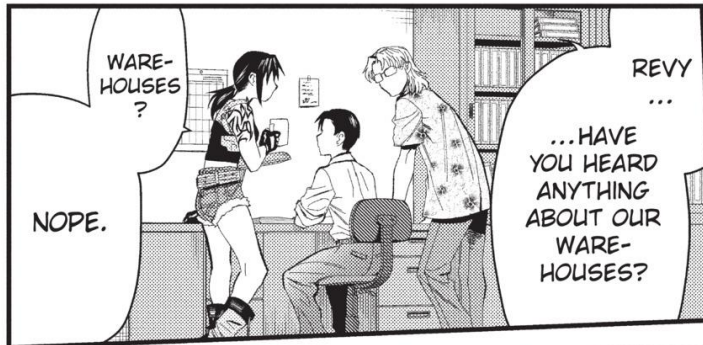


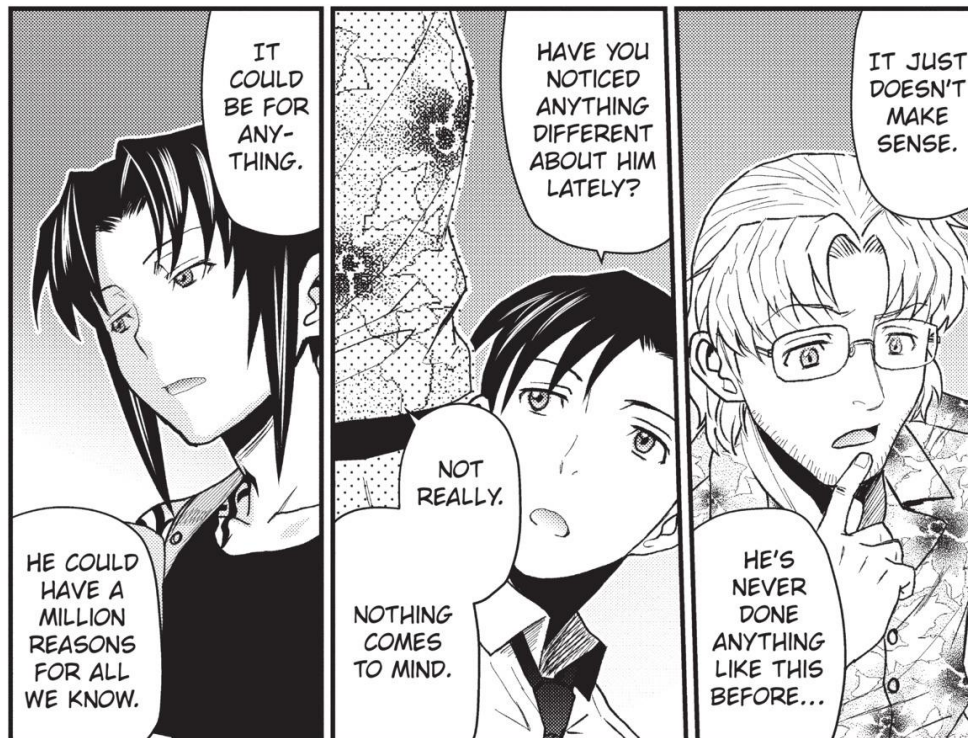
#80

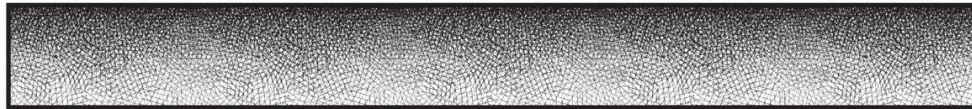
L'Homme Sombre Pt. 3

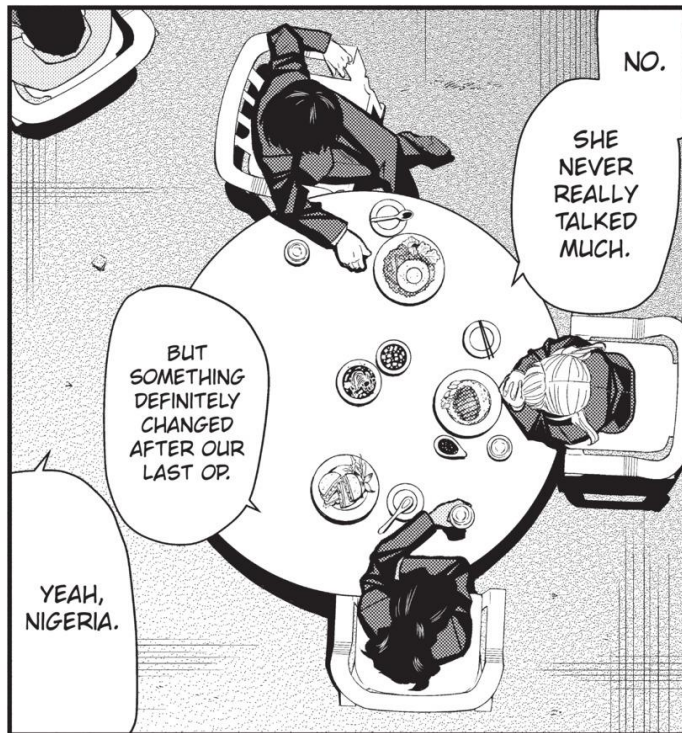












NO.

SHE
NEVER
REALLY
TALKED
MUCH.

BUT
SOMETHING
DEFINITELY
CHANGED
AFTER OUR
LAST OP.

YEAH,
NIGERIA.



THIS IS MY
FIRST JOB
WITH THIS
TEAM AND I
DON'T KNOW
MUCH ABOUT
YOU GUYS,
BUT...

...IS LE
MAJEUR
ALWAYS
LIKE
THAT?

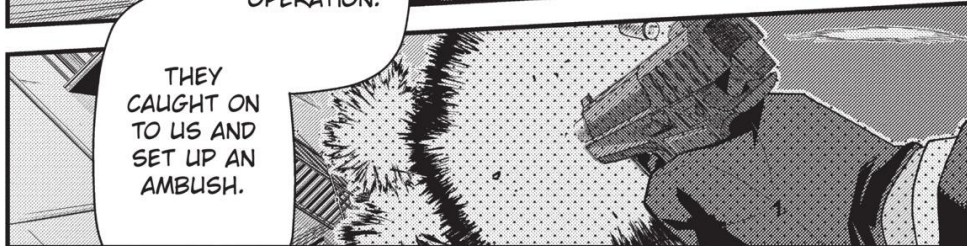


NIGERIA
WAS EVEN
WORSE
THAN THIS
JOB.

I GET WHY
LE MAJEUR
FEELS THE
WAY SHE
DOES.



IT WAS A
POORLY
PLANNED,
HIT-OR-MISS
OPERATION.



THEY
CAUGHT ON
TO US AND
SET UP AN
AMBUSH.



...SHY AND GENTLE. NOT THE KIND OF GIRL WHO YOU'D THINK WOULD END UP...
...DOING WHAT WE DO.

L'AURICULAIRE ...
...WHOSE NAME YOU TOOK OVER, WAS...



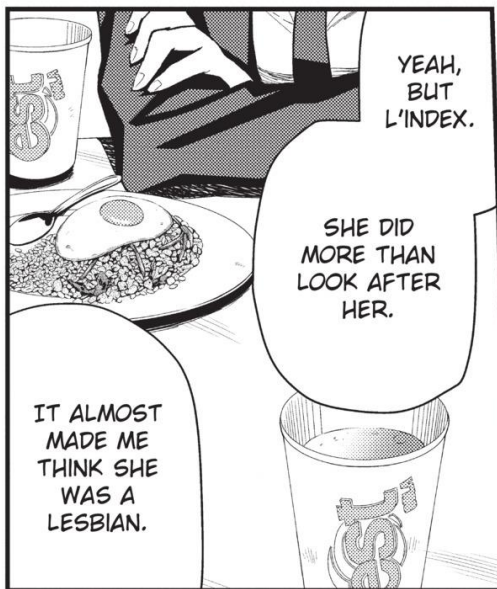
SHE DIDN'T HAVE THE NERVE OR THE EXPERTISE, BUT SHE WAS A NICE GIRL. SHE WASN'T LIKE US.

YEAH.
I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND IT EITHER.



...WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH LE MAJEUR?

AND...



YEAH, BUT L'INDEX.

SHE DID MORE THAN LOOK AFTER HER.

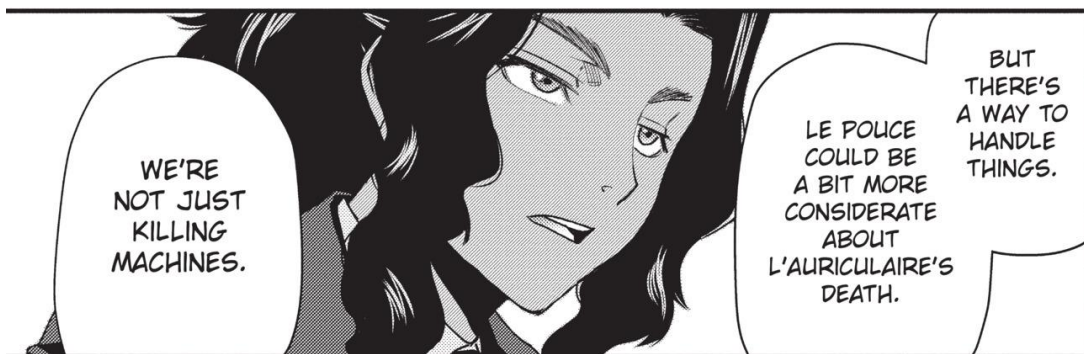
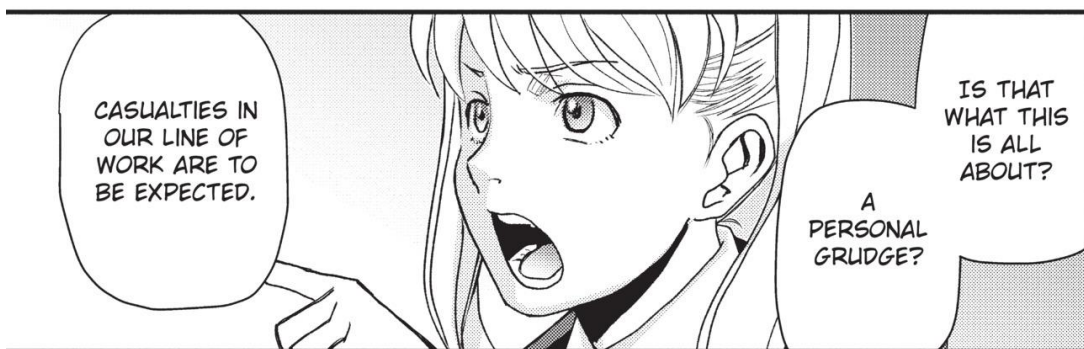
IT ALMOST MADE ME THINK SHE WAS A LESBIAN.

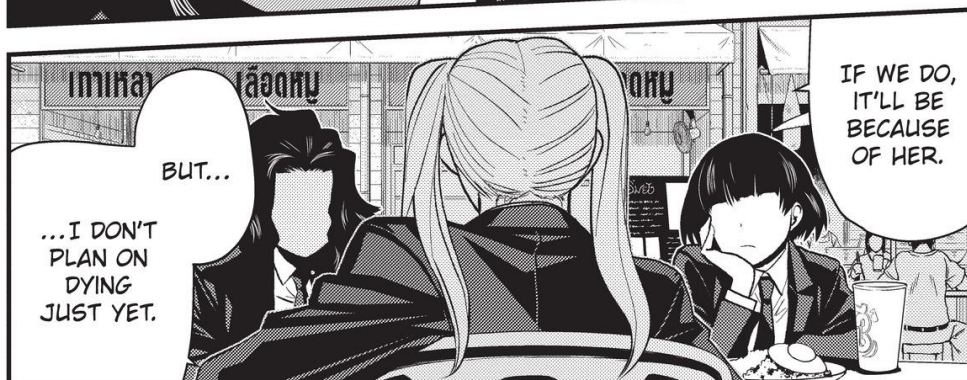
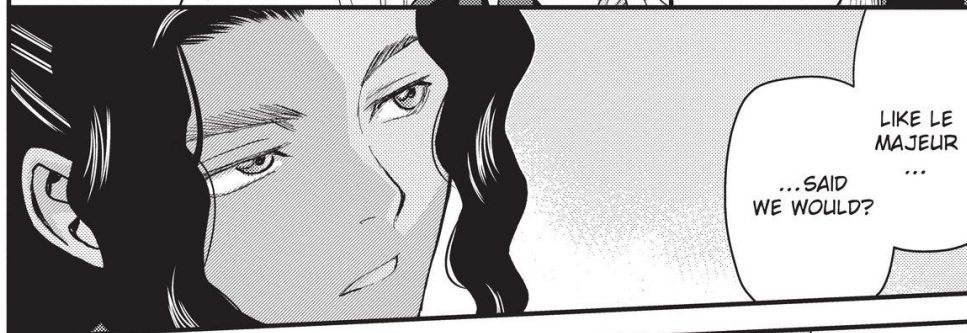
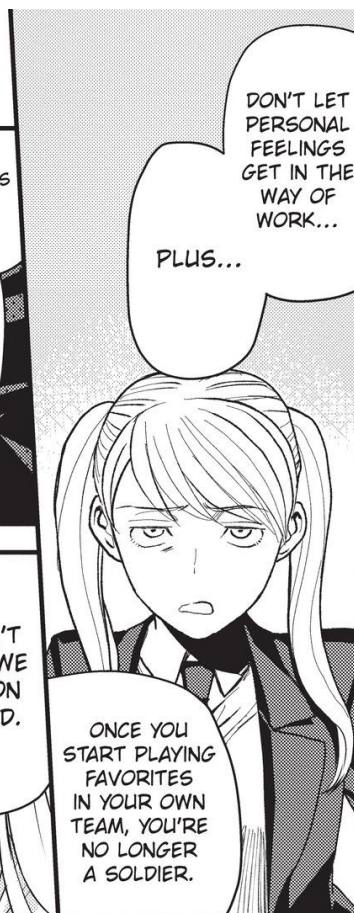


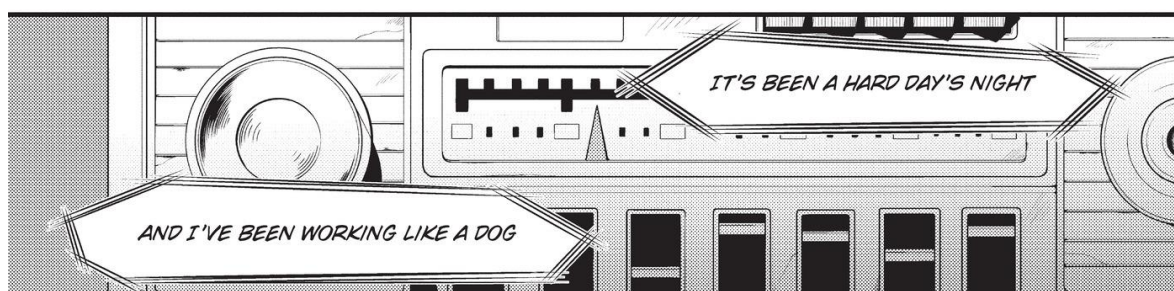
TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, L'AURICULAIRE WAS USELESS.

LE MAJEUR ENDED UP LOOKING AFTER HER.











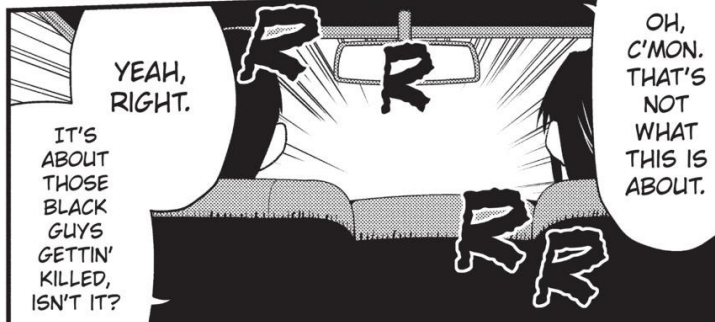
THINK YOU'RE A WHITE KNIGHT IN A CORRUPT CITY OR SOMETHING?

YOU REALLY LIKE PLAYING DETECTIVE, DON'T YOU?



GOD DAMN IT.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU PLANNING ON GETTIN' MIXED UP IN NOW?

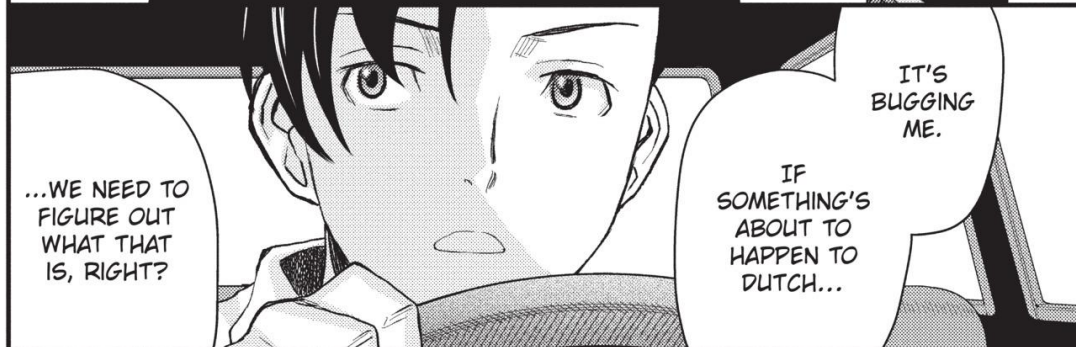


YEAH, RIGHT.

IT'S ABOUT THOSE BLACK GUYS GETTIN' KILLED, ISN'T IT?

OH, C'MON. THAT'S NOT WHAT THIS IS ABOUT.

HEY, ROCK.



...WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THAT IS, RIGHT?

IT'S BUGGING ME.

IF SOMETHING'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN TO DUTCH...



YOU'RE ALL RIGHT WITH THAT, REVV?

LOSING WHAT WE HAVE HERE?



IF DUTCH DECIDES IT'S TIME TO CALL IT QUITS...

...THEN IT'S TIME TO CALL IT QUITS.

WRONG.

IT'S DUTCH'S PROBLEM, NOT OURS.





WE MIGHT
NEED TO GO
INTO HIDING
FOR ANY
NUMBER OF
REASONS.

IT'S HOW
WE MAKE
IT TO THE
NEXT DAY.

WHEN
YOU GET
ATTACHED
TO SOME-
THING...

...IT CAN
CLOUD YOUR
JUDGMENT,
ESPECIALLY
WHEN YOUR
LIFE'S ON
THE LINE.



WE CAN
LIVE ANY-
WHERE.

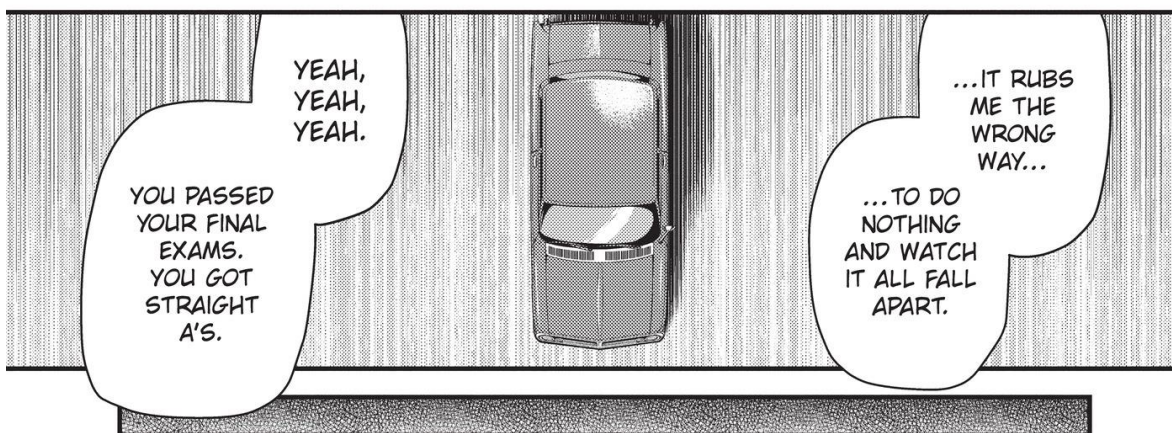
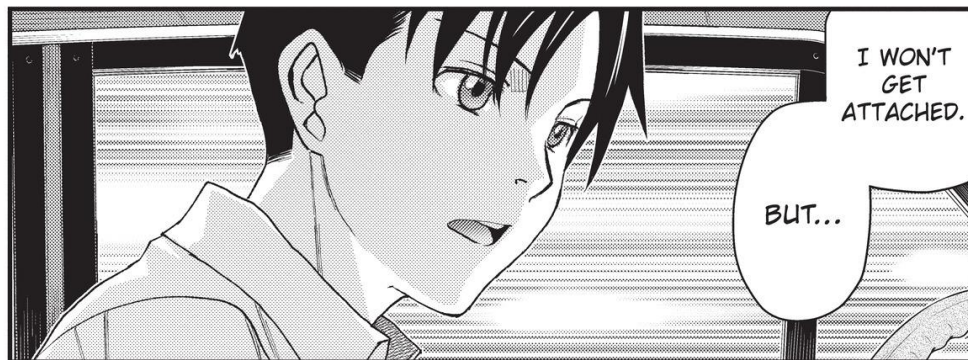
AND IT
WON'T
MATTER
WHEN
YOU'RE
DEAD
ANYWAY.

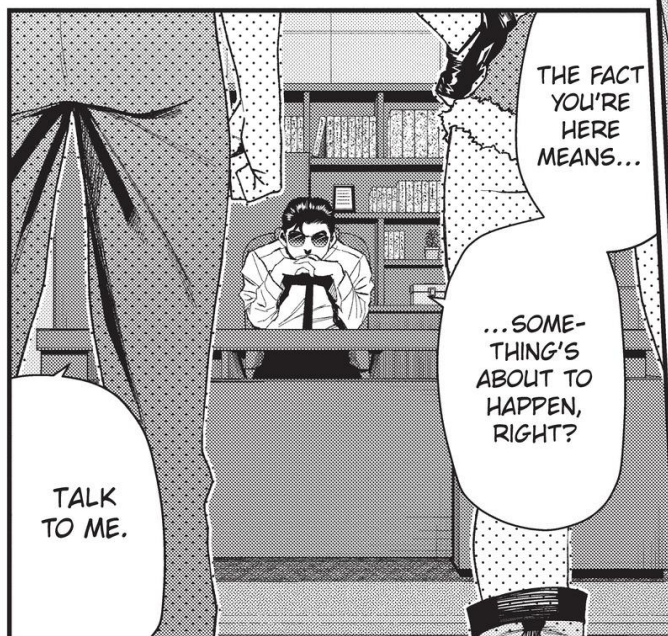
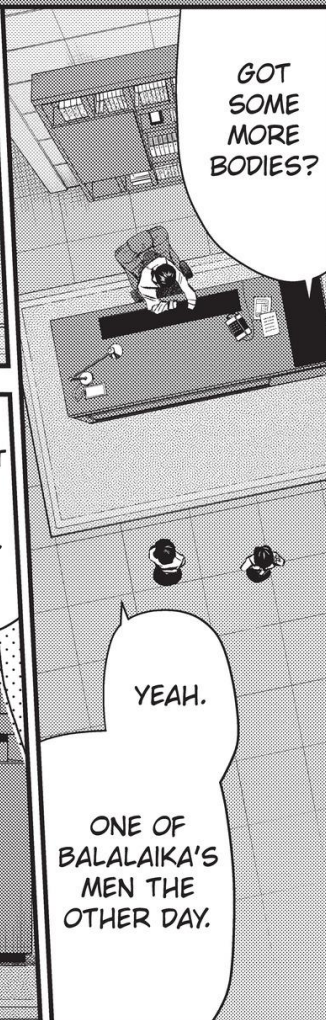
SURE,
BUT...

ANYONE WHO
CAN'T ACCEPT
THAT GETS
CRUSHED LIKE
A BUG...

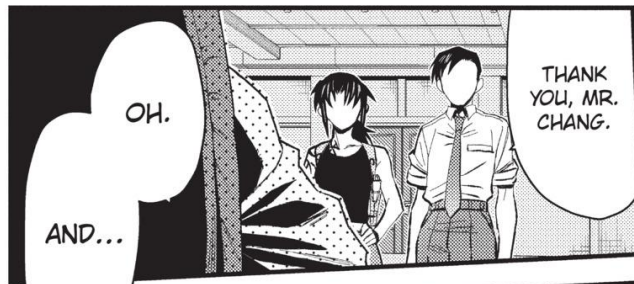
...OR ENDS UP
IN THE JOINT.
IT'S ONE OR
THE OTHER.

...WE
STILL NEED
A PLACE
TO HAVE A
LIFE, DON'T
WE?









OH.

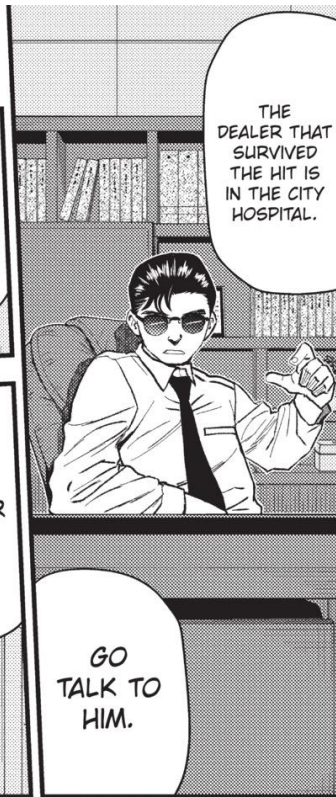
AND...

THANK
YOU, MR.
CHANG.



...SINCE
WE DON'T
KNOW WHO
THEY ARE OR
HAVE ANY
DETAILS...

...I'M SURE
YOU TWO
COULD USE
SOME HELP.



THE
DEALER THAT
SURVIVED
THE HIT IS
IN THE CITY
HOSPITAL.

GO
TALK TO
HIM.



YOU'LL
NEED
PROTECTION.



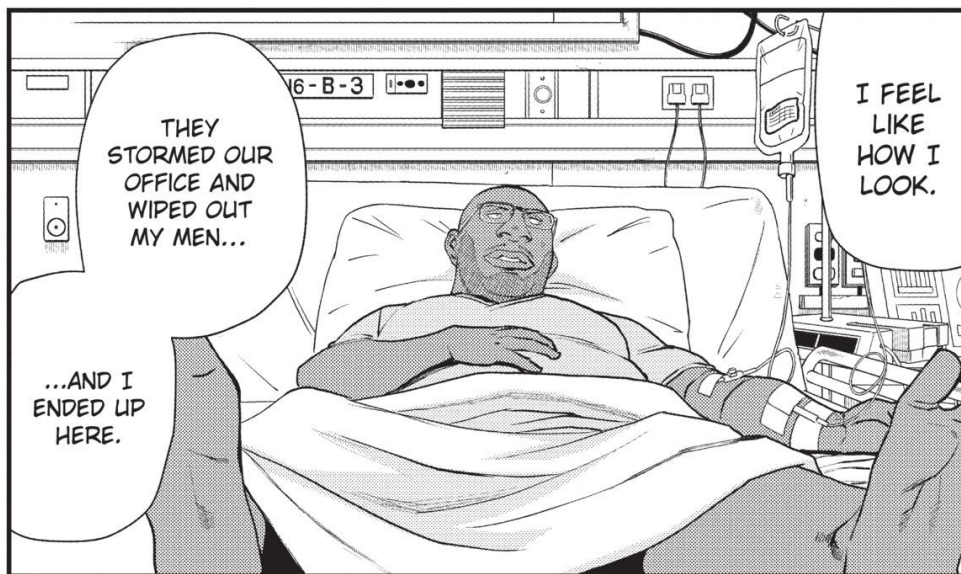
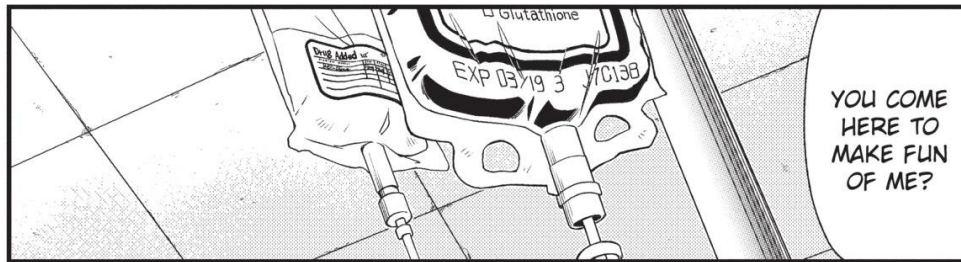
JOIN UP
WITH THEM
AND START
DIGGING.

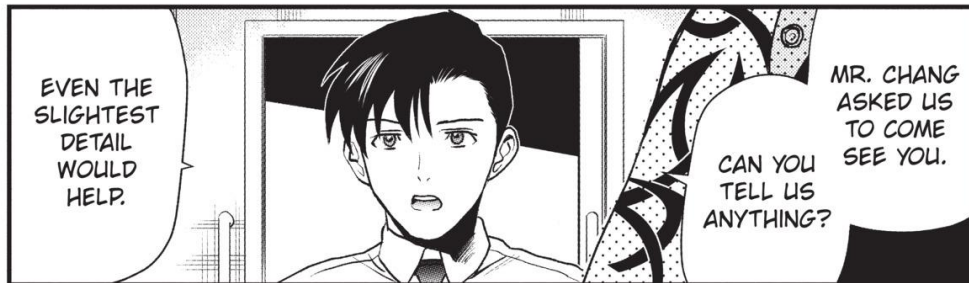
HAPPY
HUNTING.



#81

L'Homme Sombre Pt. 4





EVEN THE
SLIGHTEST
DETAIL
WOULD
HELP.

CAN YOU
TELL US
ANYTHING?

MR. CHANG
ASKED US
TO COME
SEE YOU.



THEY
STORMED
THE
OFFICE.

BESIDES
THAT...

I DON'T
REMEMBER
MUCH.

LIKE I
SAID...



THIS AIN'T
MY IDEA,
BUT IT'S
PAYBACK
FOR YOUR
MEN.

THINK
HARDER.

EVERY-
BODY
THERE
WAS
KILLED...

...EXCEPT
YOU, JINX.



AFTER
THREE
ROUNDS,
FRANZ GOT
UP TO TAKE
A LEAK.
THAT'S
WHEN...

WE CLOSED
UP SHOP AND
RETURNED TO
THE OFFICE A
LITTLE PAST
NINE THAT
NIGHT.

AUGUSTE
OPENED UP
A BOTTLE AND
WE GOT A CARD
GAME GOING
LIKE USUAL.

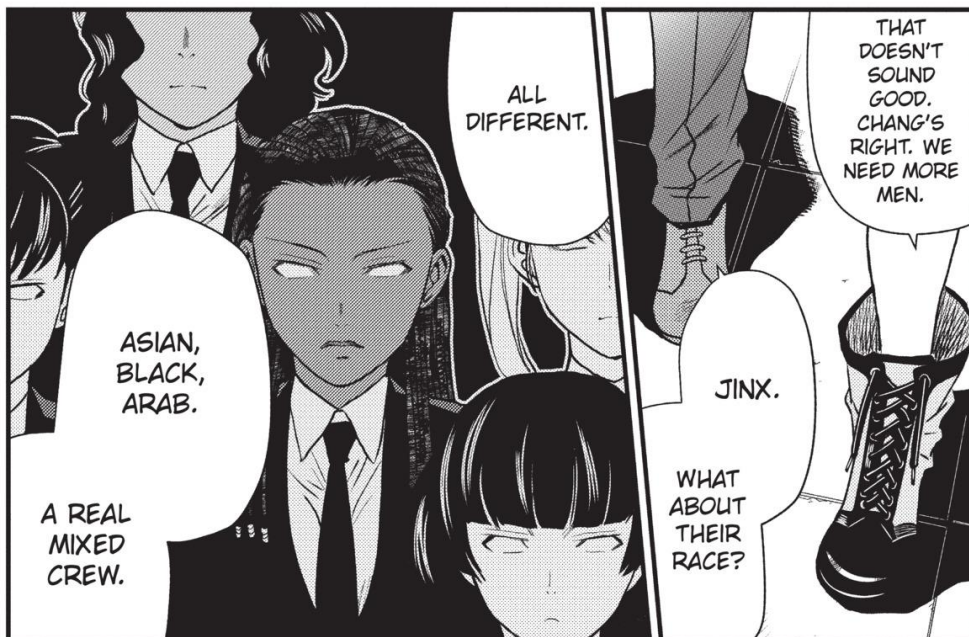
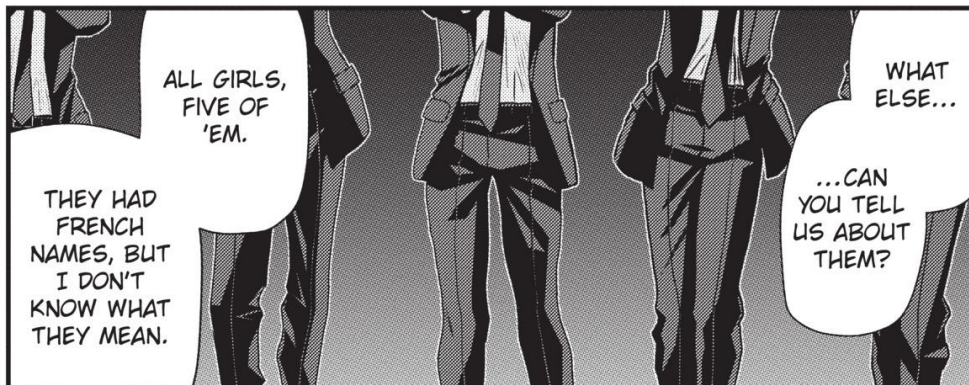
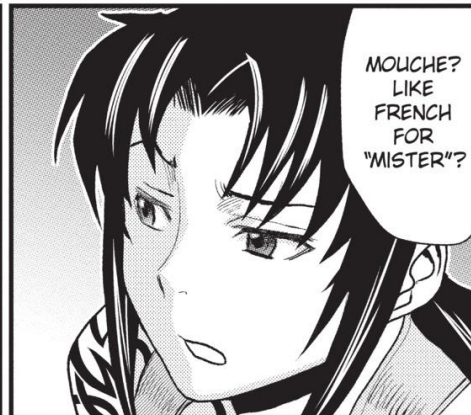
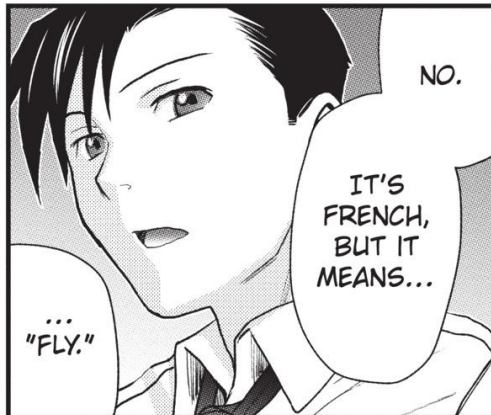


...THEY
WALKED
RIGHT IN
WITH THEIR
GUNS UP
LIKE IT WAS
NOTHING.

LITTLE
BITCHES
IN BLACK
SUITS—LIKE
THE TRIAD'S
DO.

ONE
OF 'EM
LOOKED
RIGHT AT
ME AND
ASKED...

"ARE
YOU LA
MOUCHE?"





THEY LOOKED
DOWN THEIR
GUNSIGHTS...

...AND
ASKED US
SOMETHING
WEIRD.

A
DATE.

THEY ASKED
IF BURKINA
FASO,
SEPTEMBER
18, 1989,
RANG A
BELL.

A
DATE?

I DIDN'T
KNOW WHAT
THAT MEANT,
BUT THEY
WERE REAL
HUNG UP ON
THAT DATE.

MAN, I
DON'T EVEN
REMEMBER
MY MAMA'S
BIRTHDAY.





BOTH OF MY KNEES WERE SHOT OUT AND NO ONE ELSE WAS BREATHING.

I JUST KEPT REPEATING "DON'T KILL ME. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING." IT'S EMBARRASSING, BUT THAT'S THE TRUTH.

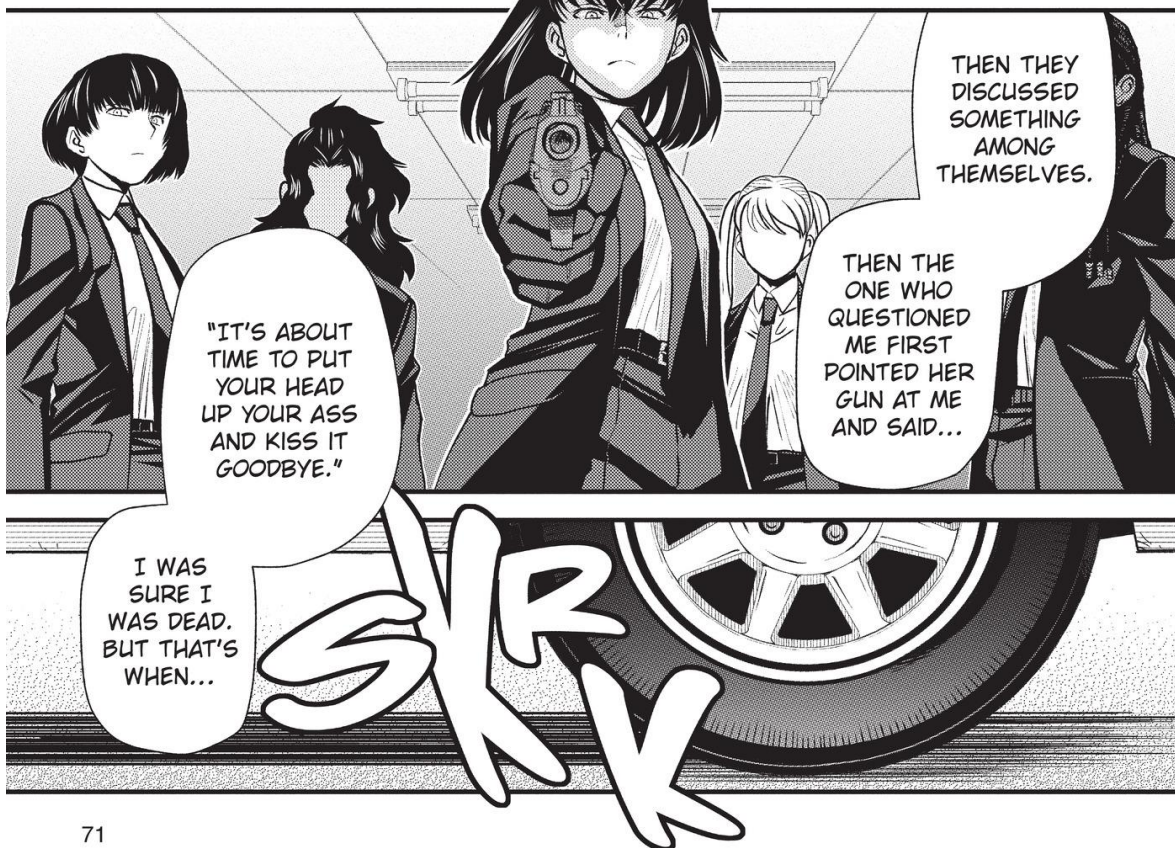


LEAVE NO WITNESSES, HUH.

A MASSACRE.

AND THEN WHAT?

THEY DEFINITELY KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING.



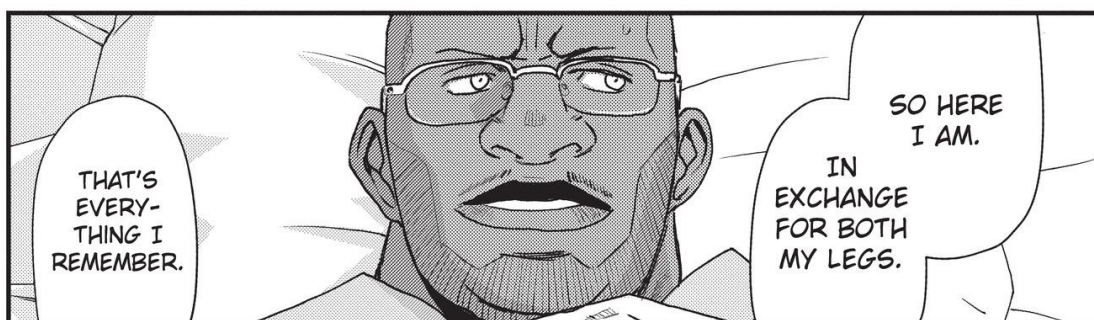
THEN THEY DISCUSSED SOMETHING AMONG THEMSELVES.

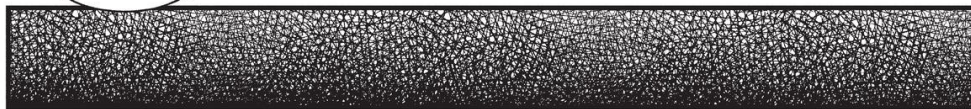
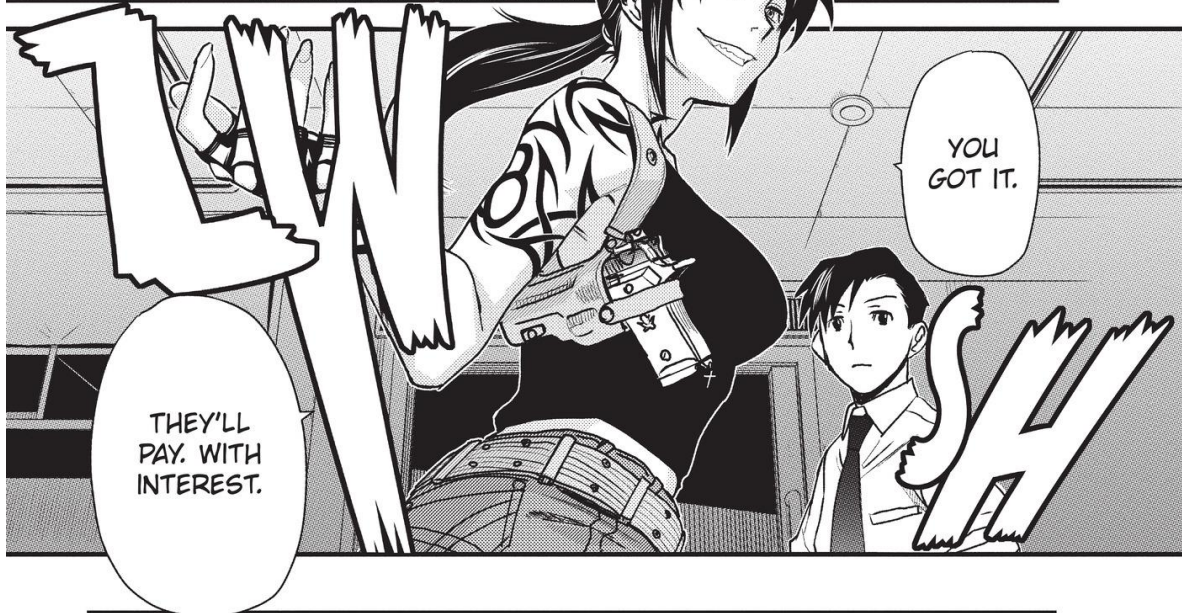
THEN THE ONE WHO QUESTIONED ME FIRST POINTED HER GUN AT ME AND SAID...

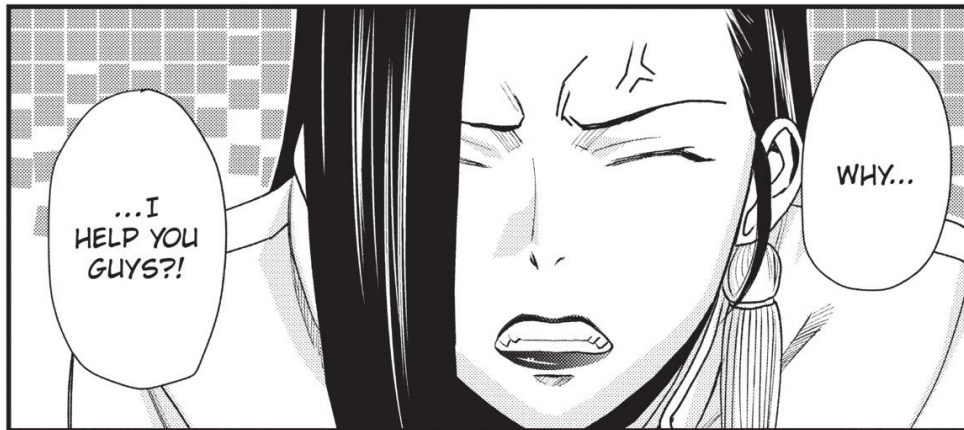
"IT'S ABOUT TIME TO PUT YOUR HEAD UP YOUR ASS AND KISS IT GOODBYE."

I WAS SURE I WAS DEAD. BUT THAT'S WHEN...

SKR

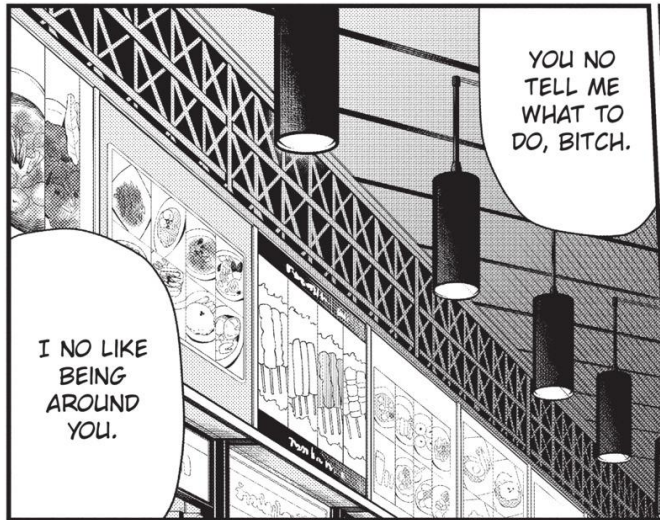






...I
HELP YOU
GUYS?!

WHY...



YOU NO
TELL ME
WHAT TO
DO, BITCH.

I NO LIKE
BEING
AROUND
YOU.



MR. CHANG
OFFER ME
FIRST JOB
IN LONG TIME
AND THIS
WHAT I
GET?



THIS
IS MY
JOB.

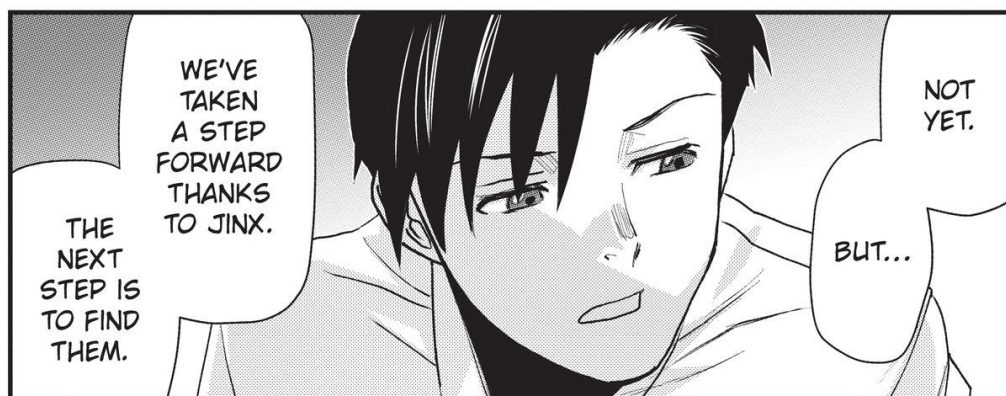
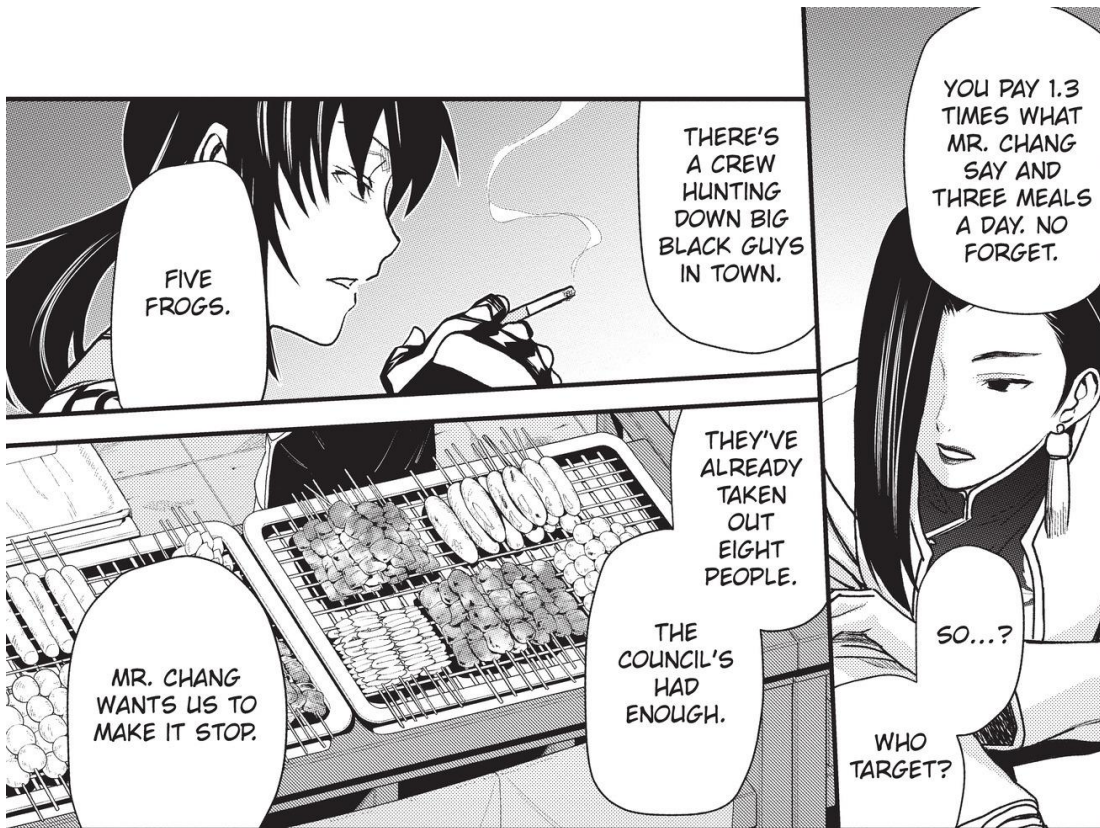
I'LL
COVER IT,
SHENHUA.

WHAT
ABOUT
PER
DIEM?

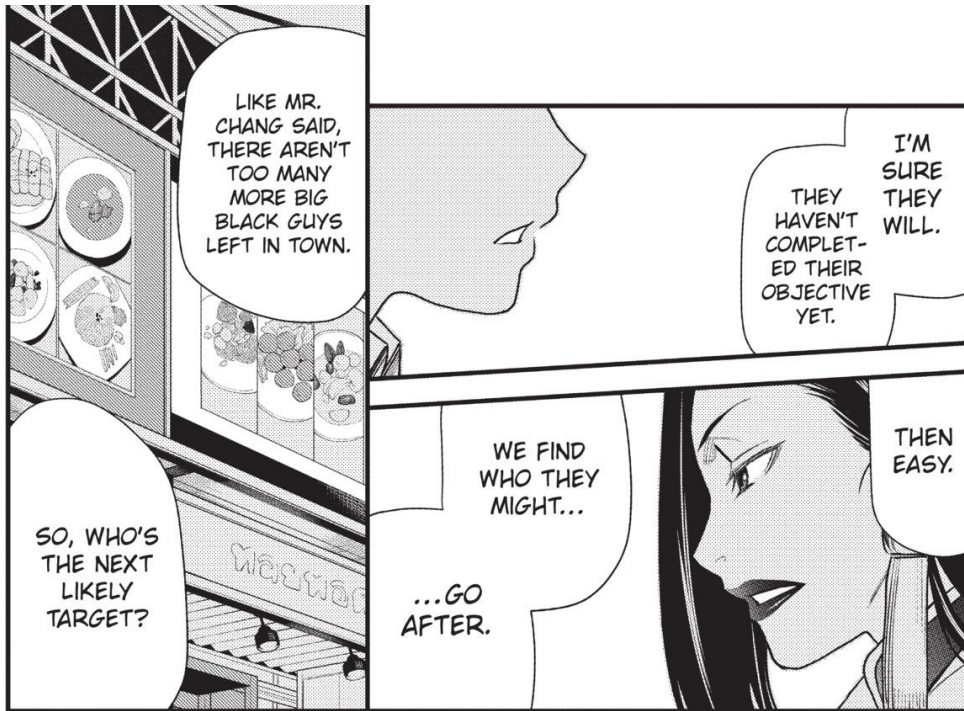
YOU
GONNA PAY
FOR THREE
MEALS A
DAY?

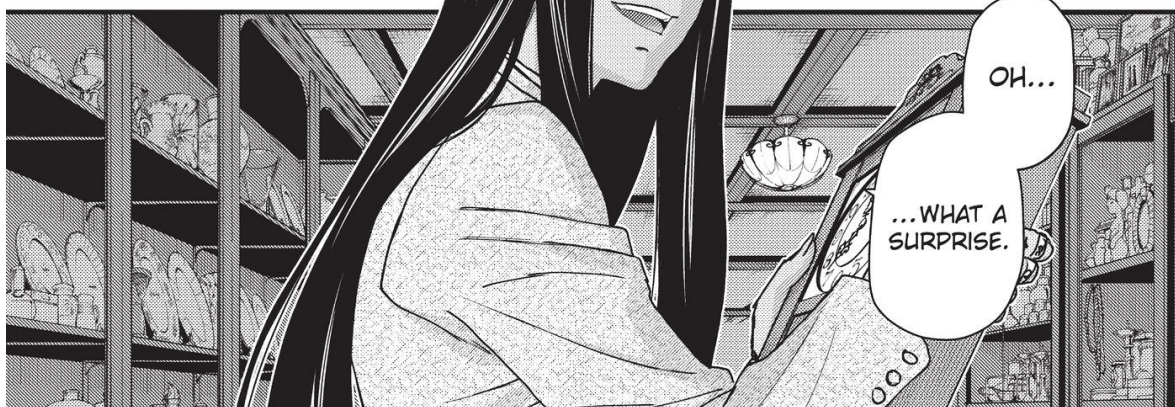
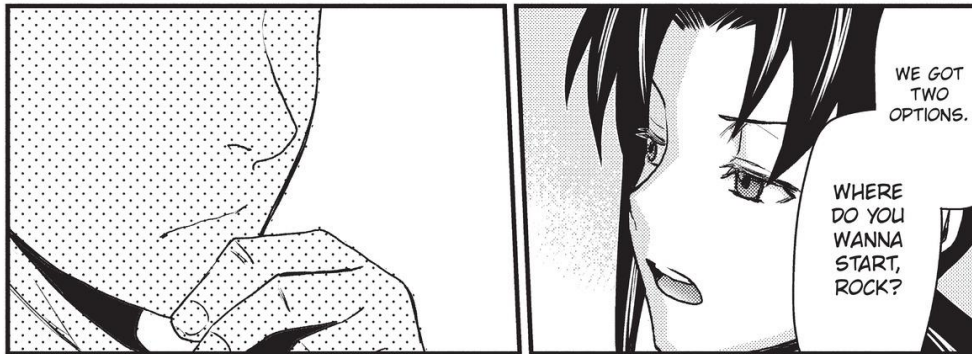
IT'S MR.
CHANG'S
ORDERS.

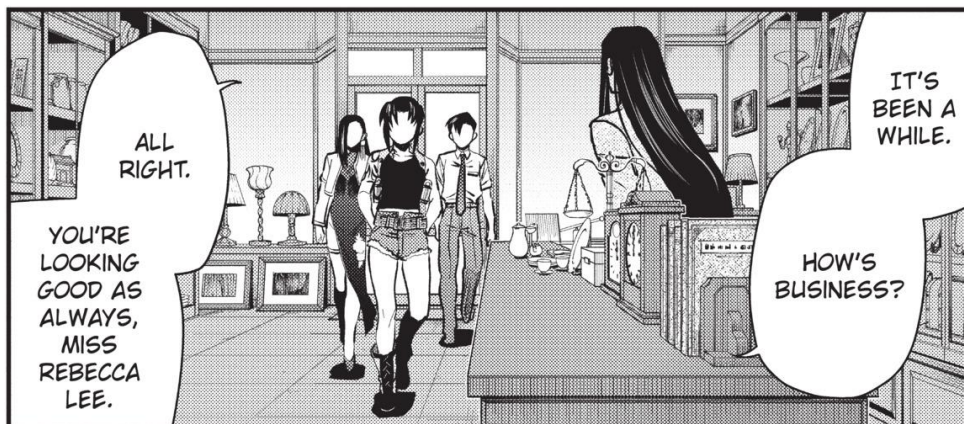
SO,
SHUT UP
AND SIT
DOWN.

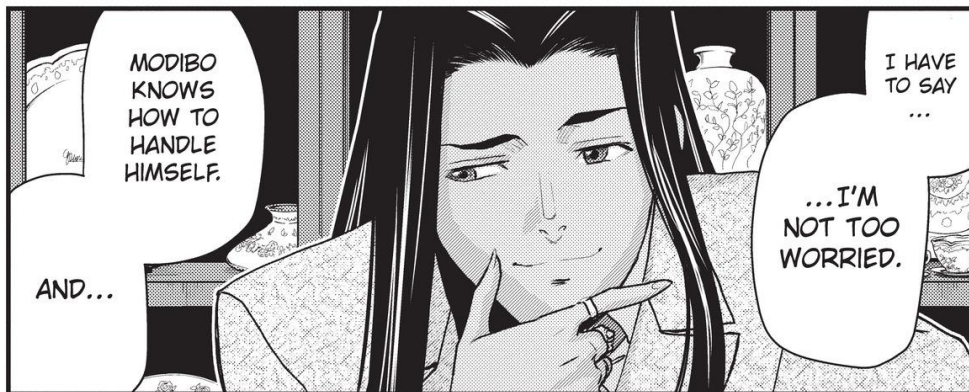
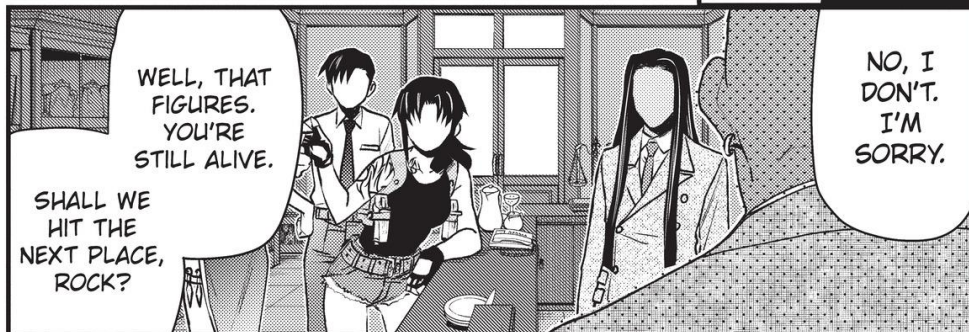
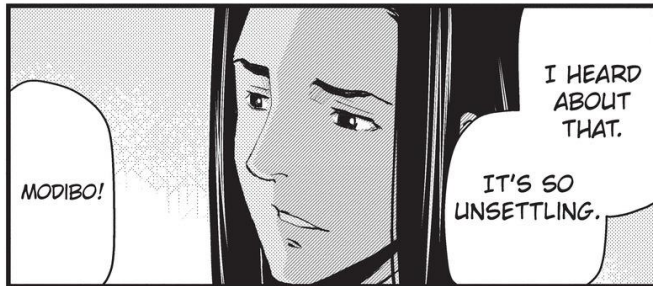














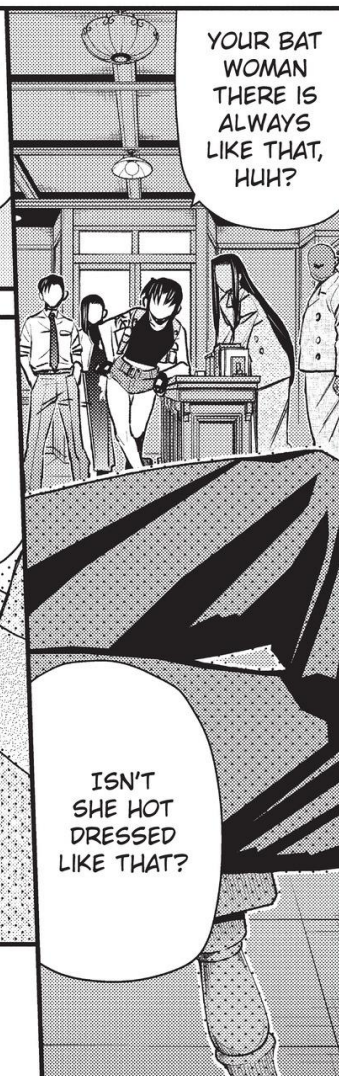
WE
HAVE
A...

...
DEPENDABLE
SECURITY
GUARD.



OH,
MISS
LEE.

WE'RE FREE
TO DRESS
HOWEVER
WE PLEASE.



YOUR BAT
WOMAN
THERE IS
ALWAYS
LIKE THAT,
HUH?



COULD I
INTEREST
YOU IN
SOME...

...18TH-
CENTURY
STEEL
ACCESSO-
RIES?

NAH!

WHAT
WOULD
I DO
WITH
THEM?

KLK

ISN'T
SHE HOT
DRESSED
LIKE THAT?



STICK
TO THE
PLAN.

I'LL WAIT
OUT HERE.
L'ANNULAIRE,
YOU'RE ON
POINT.

LET'S
GO.









OUR
BUSINESS
IS WITH
THAT
BLACK
MAN.
STAY OUT OF
THIS IF YOU
DON'T WANT
TO DIE.

WHO'RE
YOU?



WHAT
EXACTLY
IS YOUR
BUSI-
NESS?

TELL
ME.

WE GOT
BUSINESS
WITH PEOPLE
THAT GOT
BUSINESS
WITH BLACK
GUYS.

WHAT A
COINCI-
DENCE.



LE
MAJEUR.

HEH
HEH
HEH.

FUCK
OFF.

WE DON'T
HAVE TIME
FOR THIS
BULLSHIT.

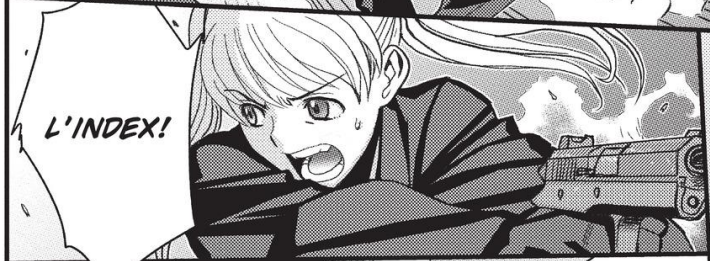
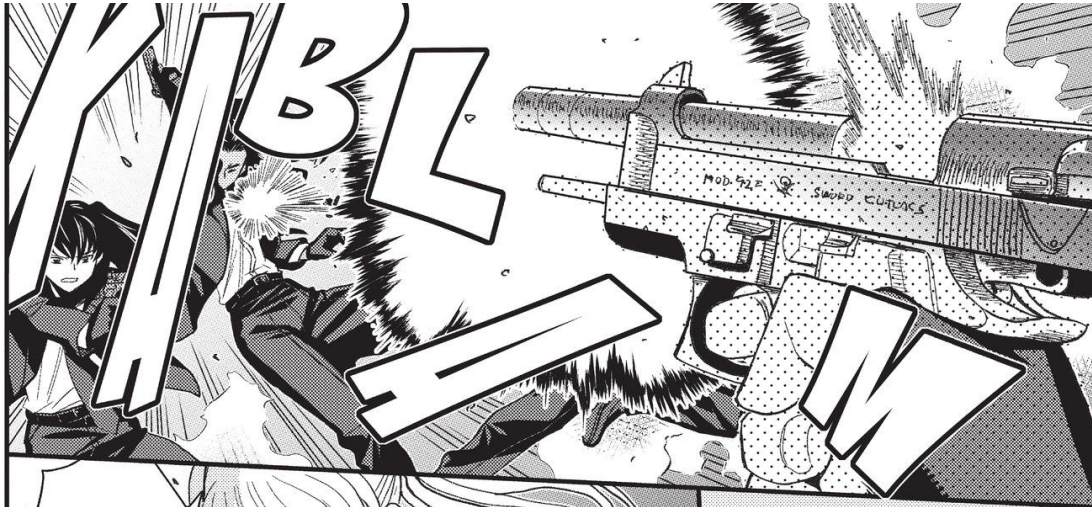
YOU WANT
ANOTHER
BLOOD-
BATH?

DON'T
YOU EVER
LEARN?

FUCK
AROUND
AND FIND
OUT.

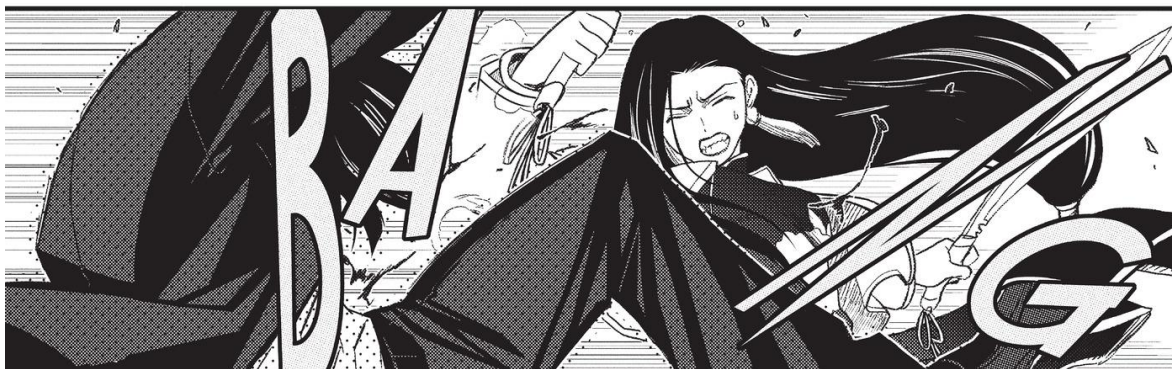
I SEE YOU'RE
PACKING A
BIG ONE. YOU
SURE YOU
CAN HANDLE
THAT THING?





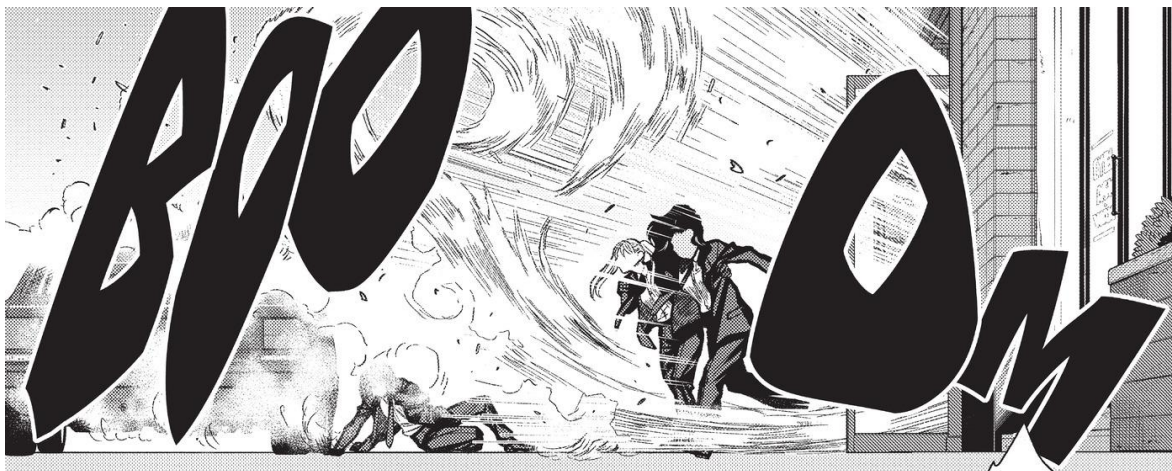








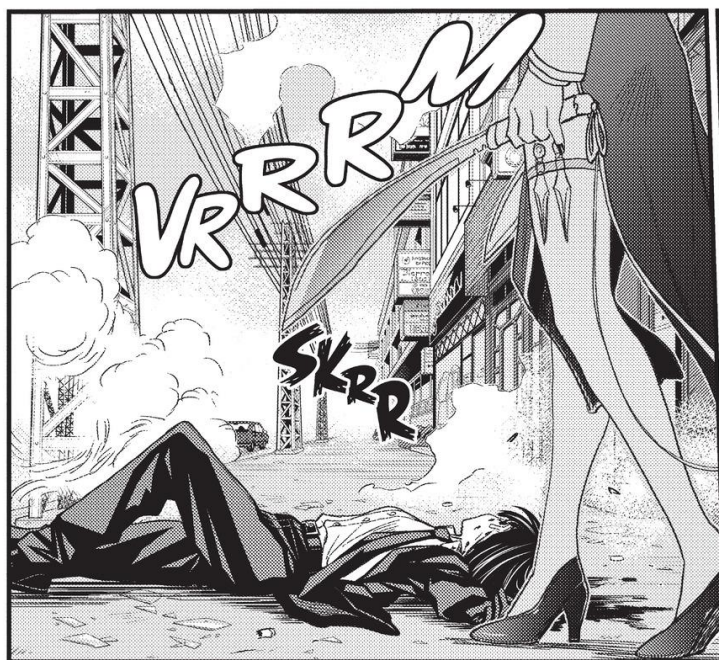


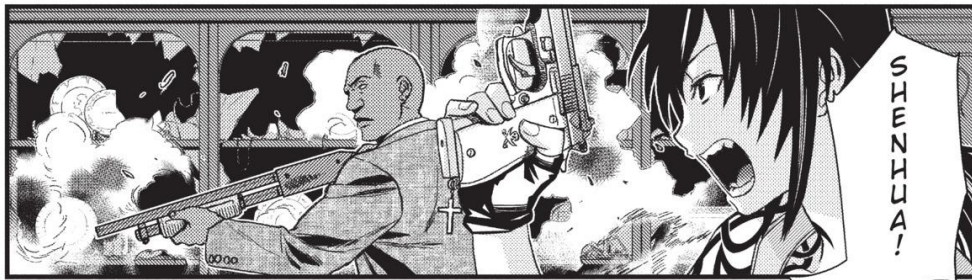
















NOT
YET.

SHE'S GOT
A TON OF
QUESTIONS
TO ANSWER.

RA
TL

THAT
OUGHTA
DO IT.

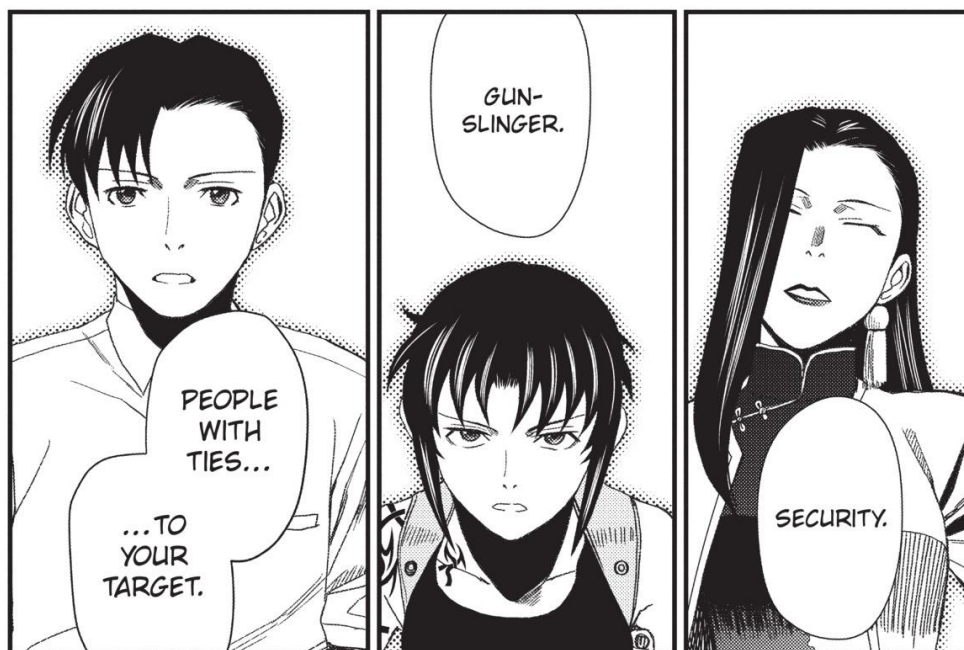
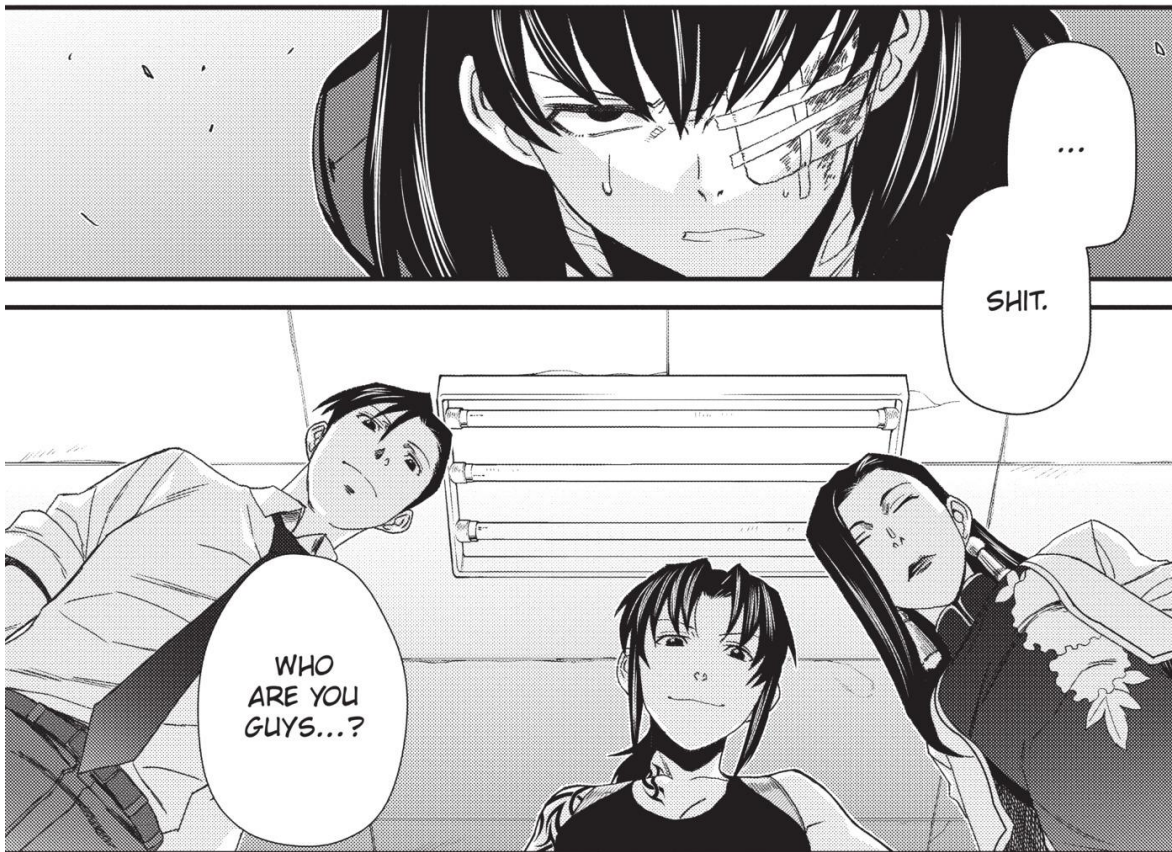
SHE'S
NOT GOING
ANYWHERE.

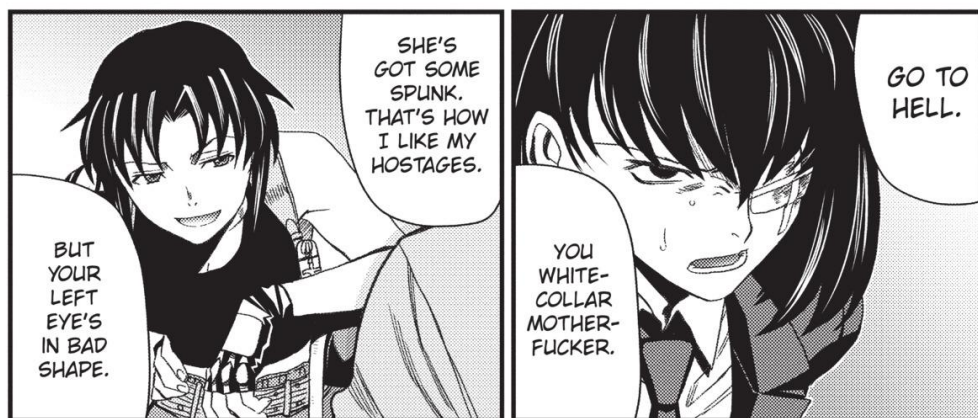
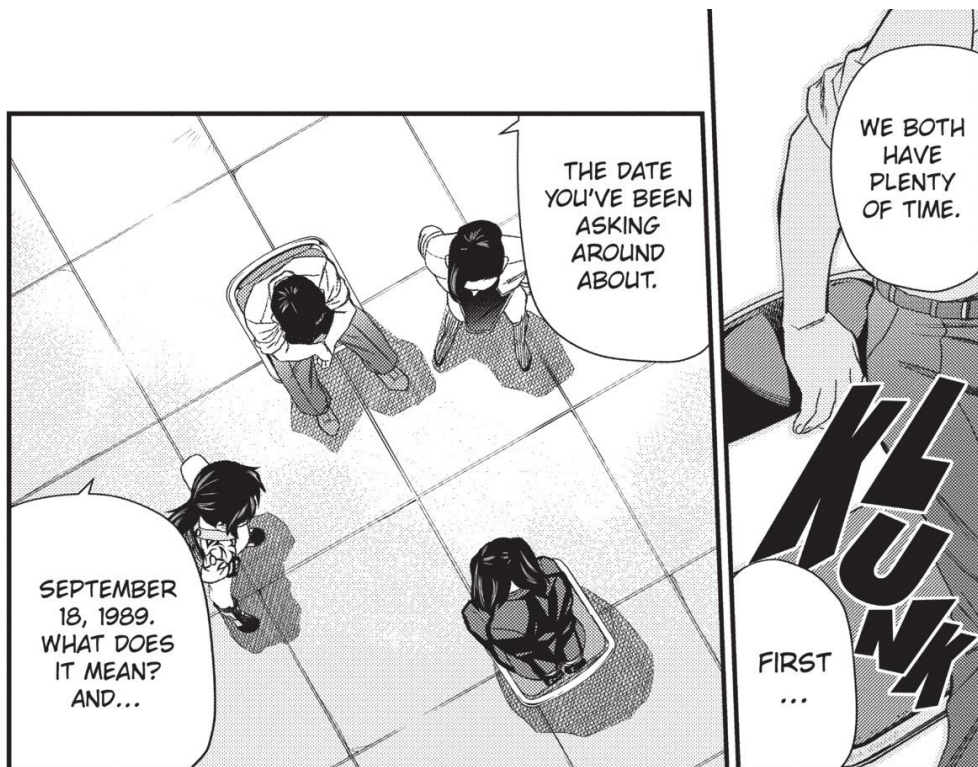
RA
TL

HEY,
WAKE
UP!

SHOULDN'T
WE BE TAKING
HER TO DOC
HEARTLAND'S
PLACE?

#83
L'Homme Sombre
Pt. 6





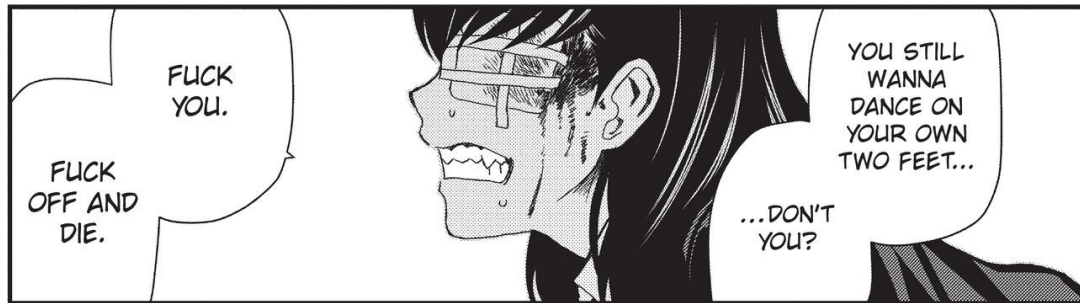


...YOU TORTURED THE BLACK GUYS IF YOU WANT.

...WE CAN TORTURE YOU THE WAY...

LEFT UNTREATED, IT'LL GET INFECTED.

AND...



FUCK YOU.

FUCK OFF AND DIE.

YOU STILL WANNA DANCE ON YOUR OWN TWO FEET...

...DON'T YOU?



WE CAN BE YOUR FRIENDS IF YOU LET US.

WE CAN ALL BE REAL FRIENDLY. SING "KUMBAYA" TOGETHER.

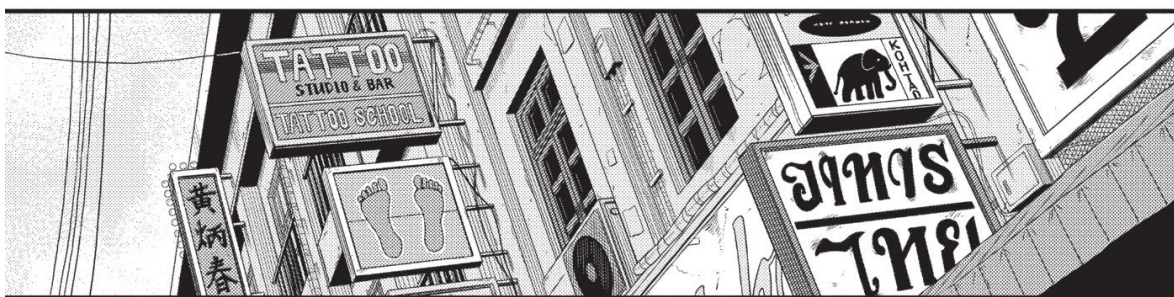
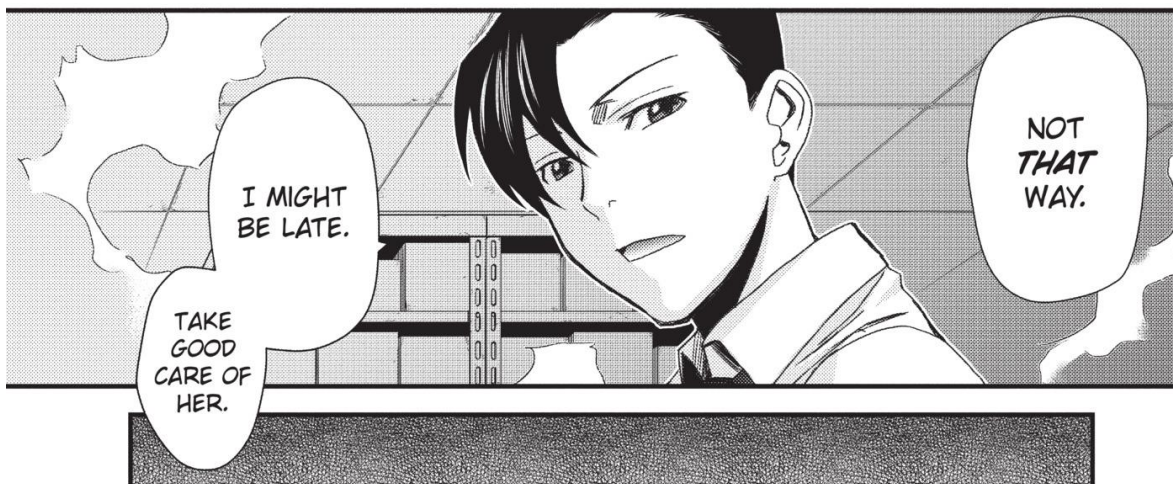
AND THAT'S WHAT WE WANT.

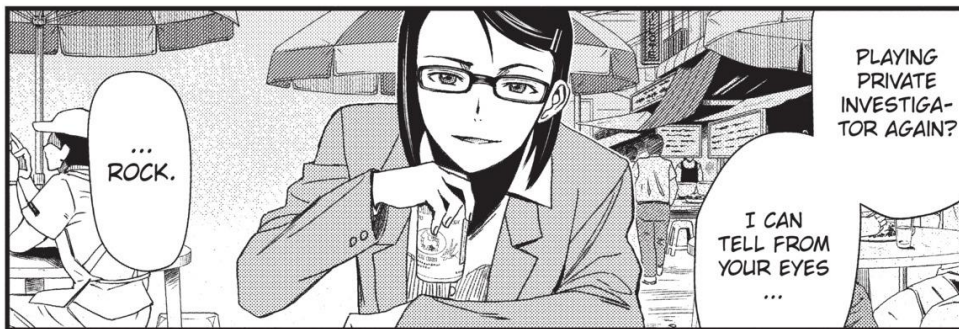
NOT VERY COOPERATIVE.

LISTEN TO ME VERY CLOSELY.

YOU'RE A HOSTAGE. YOU'RE ALONE AND ON YOUR OWN.



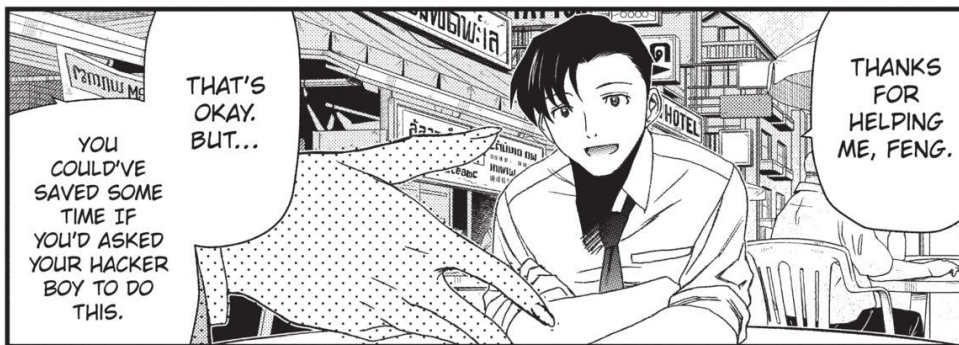




...
ROCK.

PLAYING
PRIVATE
INVESTIGA-
TOR AGAIN?

I CAN
TELL FROM
YOUR EYES
...



YOU
COULD'VE
SAVED SOME
TIME IF
YOU'D ASKED
YOUR HACKER
BOY TO DO
THIS.

THAT'S
OKAY.
BUT...

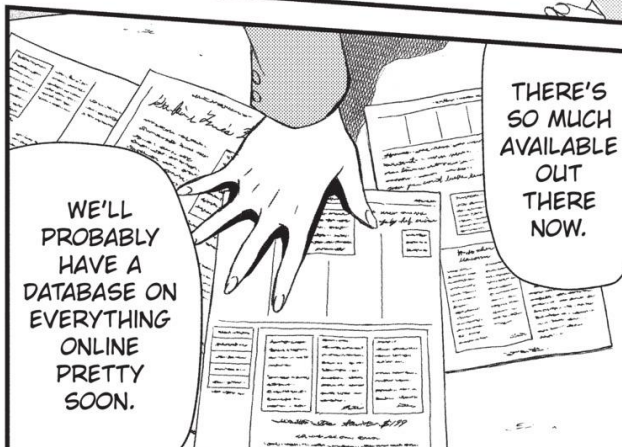
THANKS
FOR
HELPING
ME, FENG.



I RAN
A QUICK
SEARCH
THROUGH
THE
PAPERS.

ANY-
WAY.

LET'S
GET
TO IT.



WE'LL
PROBABLY
HAVE A
DATABASE ON
EVERYTHING
ONLINE
PRETTY
SOON.

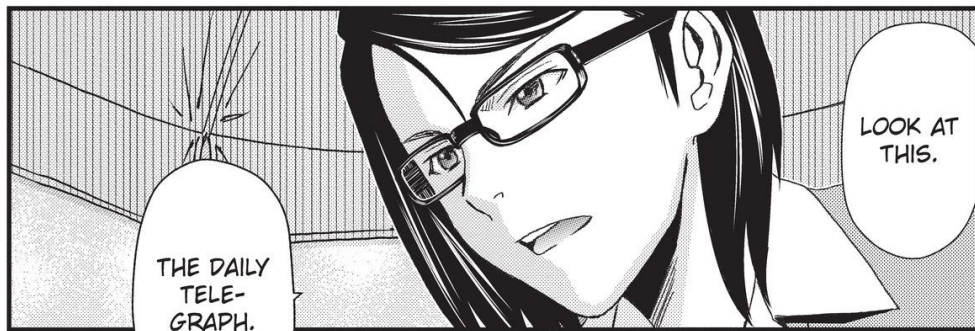
THERE'S
SO MUCH
AVAILABLE
OUT
THERE
NOW.

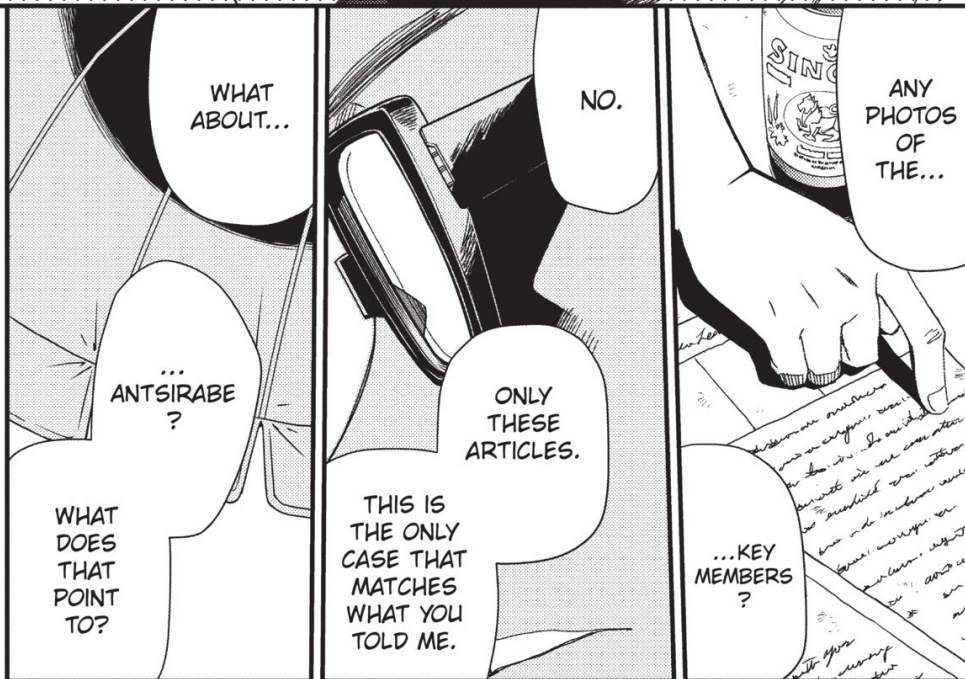


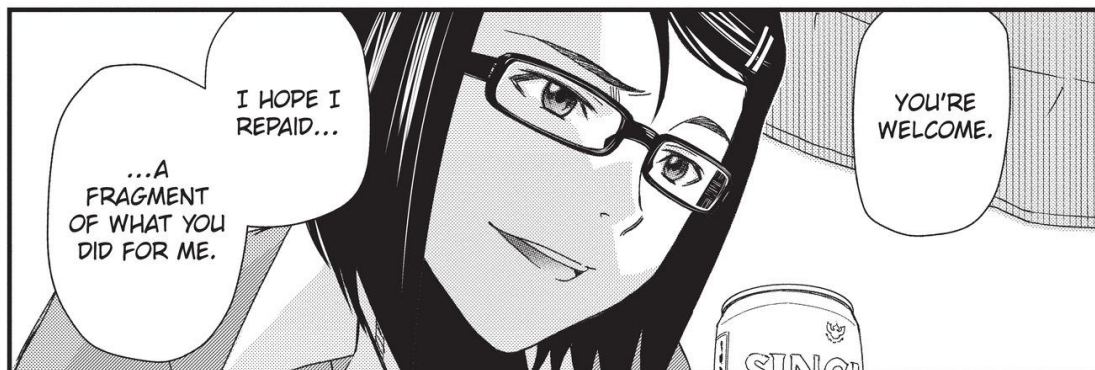
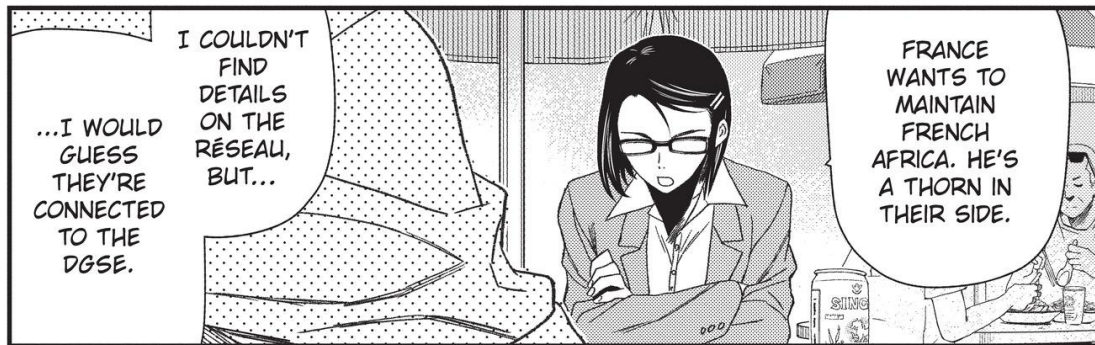
BENNY
SERVES AS
DUTCH'S
FIRST
MATE WHEN
THEY'RE
OUT AT
SEA.

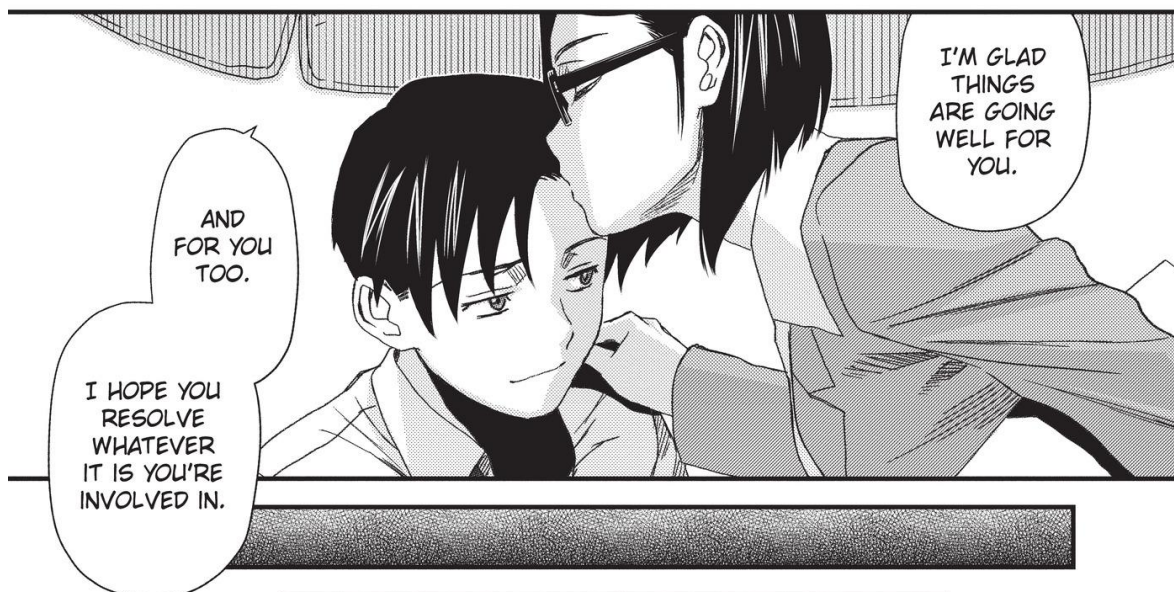
I DON'T
WANT HIM
DRAWING
DUTCH'S
IRE.

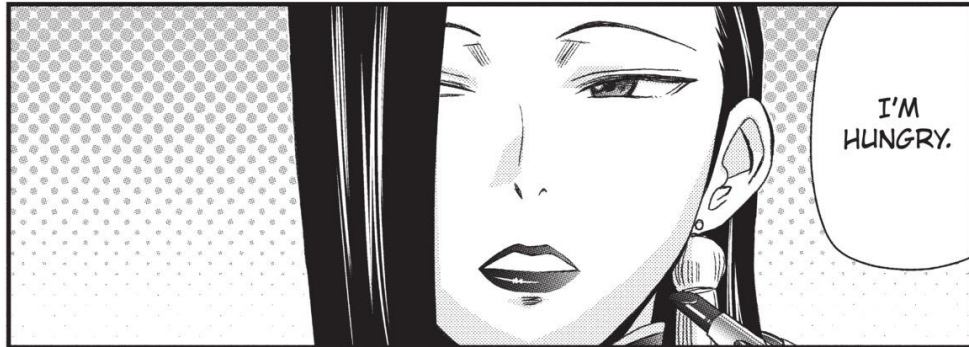
SUCH A
CARING
COLLEAGUE.
THAT'S
WHAT I LIKE
ABOUT YOU.

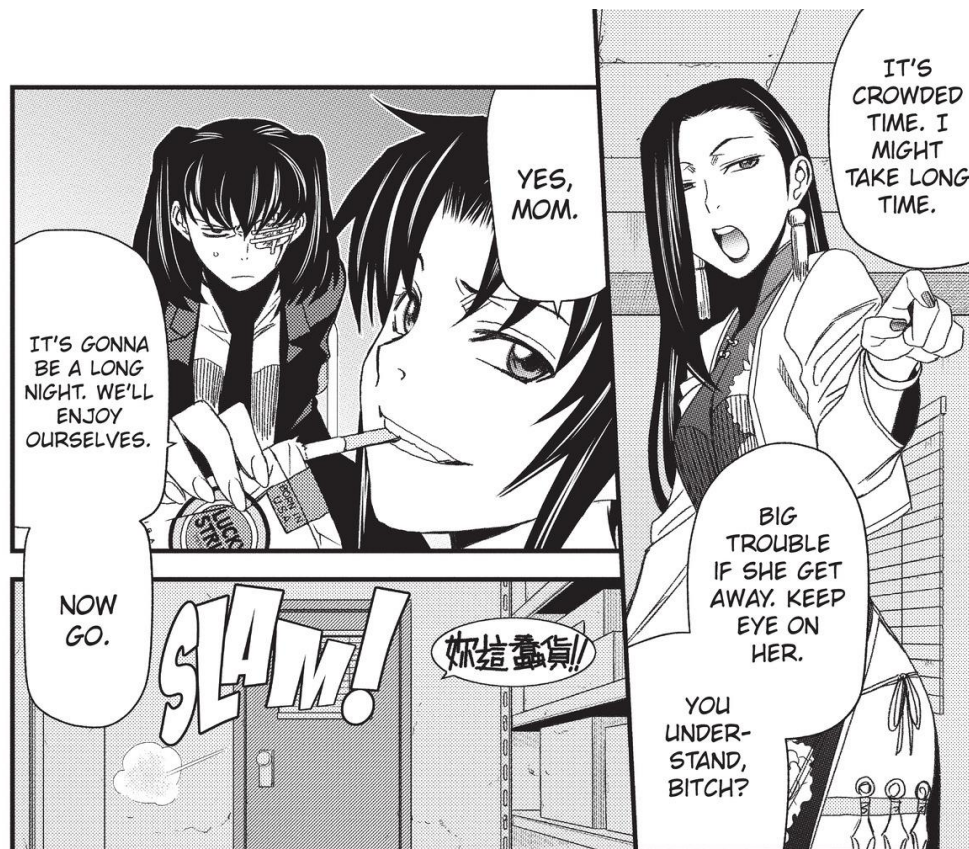


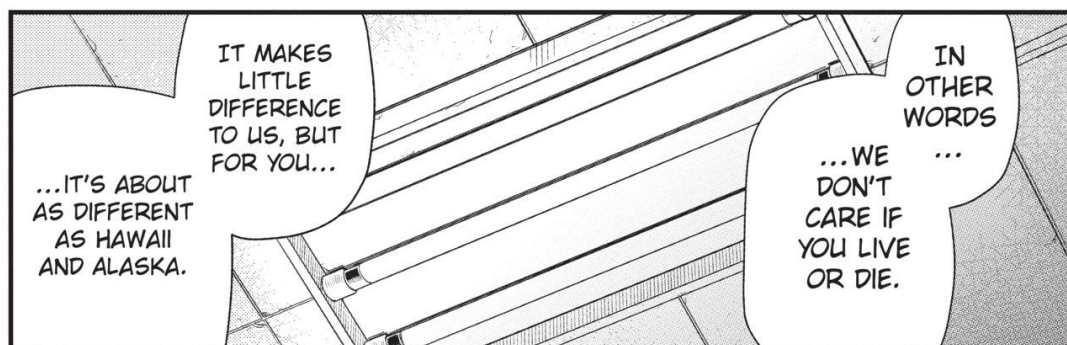


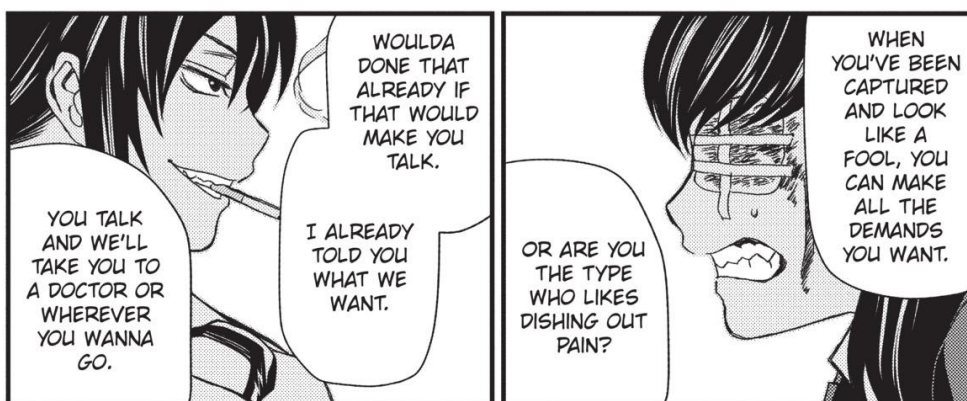
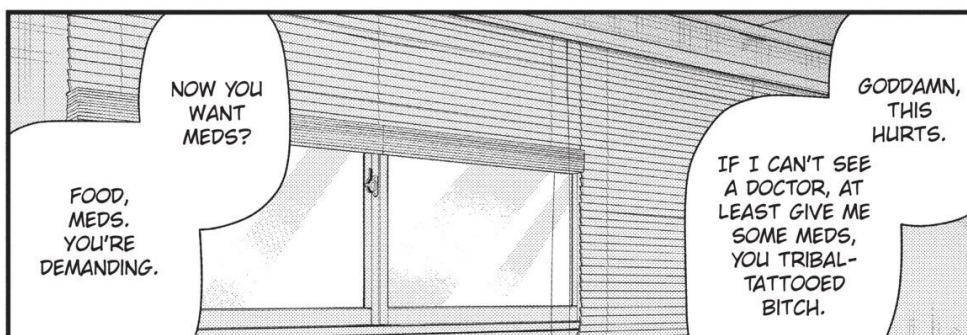


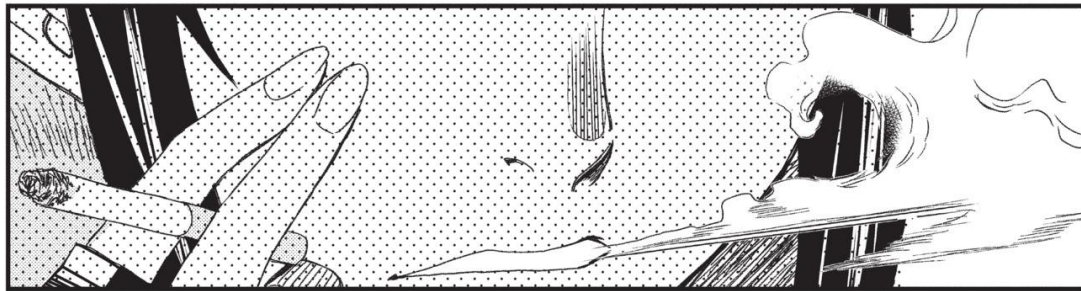


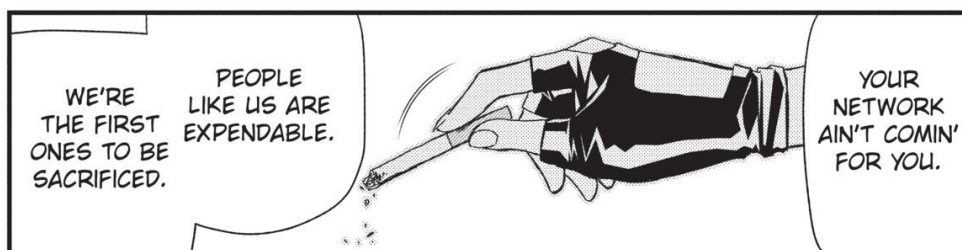
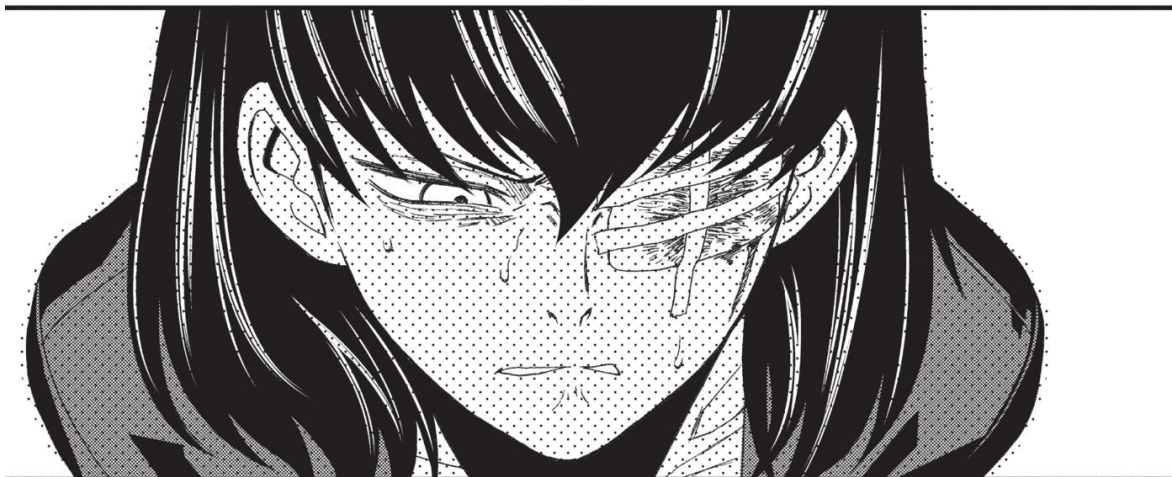












WE'RE
THE FIRST
ONES TO BE
SACRIFICED.

PEOPLE
LIKE US ARE
EXPENDABLE.

YOUR
NETWORK
AIN'T COMIN'
FOR YOU.



YOU KEEP
SURVIVING.

AND YOU GET
REVENGE IF
YOU CAN.



I DON'T
CARE
WHAT YOU
CHOOSE.

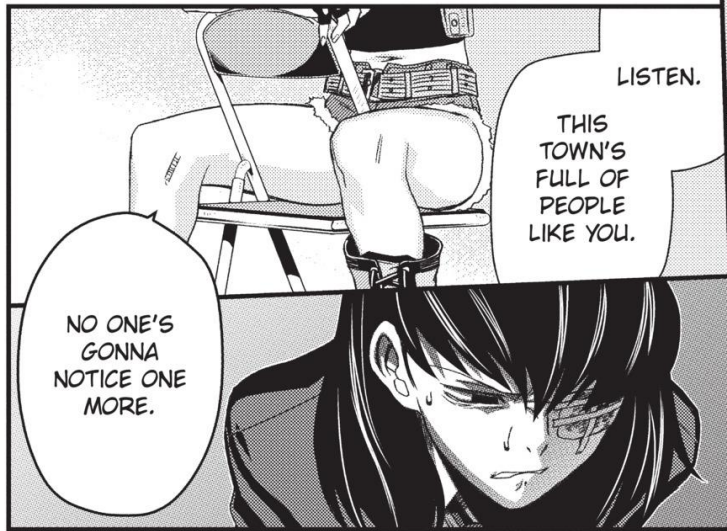
BUT...



BUT...

...YOU
SURVIVED.

SO, WHAT
DO YOU DO
NEXT?



LISTEN.

THIS
TOWN'S
FULL OF
PEOPLE
LIKE YOU.

NO ONE'S
GONNA
NOTICE ONE
MORE.



IT'S A
DIFFERENT
WORLD
HERE.

IF YOU KEEP
YOUR EYES
OPEN AND
YOUR GUARD
UP...

...THIS
PLACE CAN
BE PRETTY
HAPPENING.



...ONE
THING I
CAN SAY
IS...

...YOU CAN
COVER FOR
THE PEOPLE
WHO LEFT
YOU BEHIND
ALL YOU
WANT.

BUT
YOU AIN'T
GETTING
AN AWARD
FOR IT.



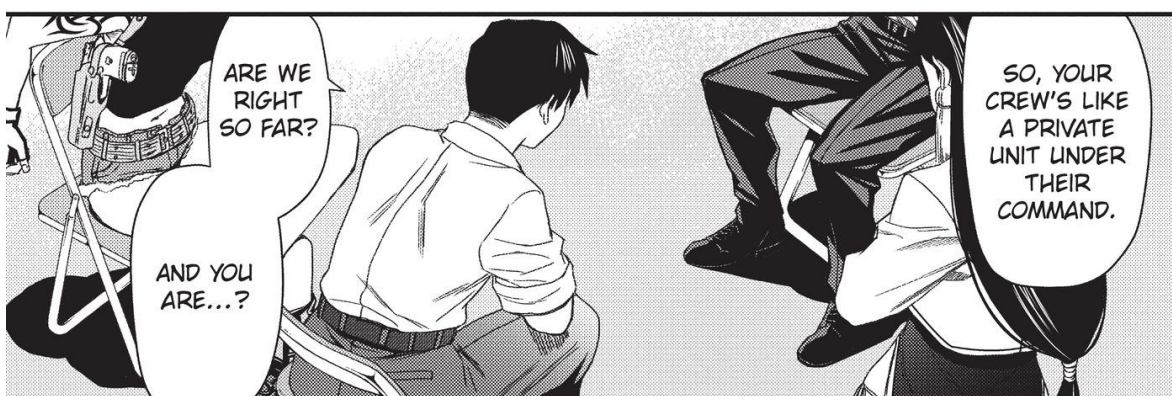
SO
DECIDE.

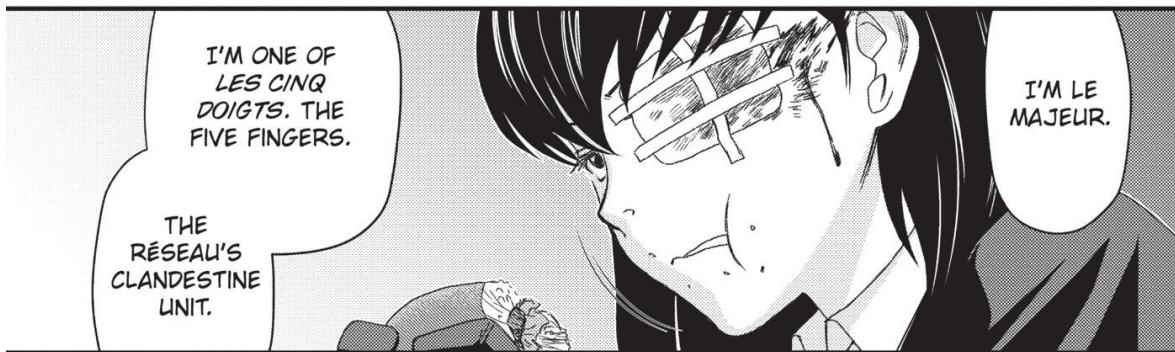
HOW THINGS
PLAY OUT IS
UP TO YOU.



#84

L'Homme Sombre Pt. 7





I'M ONE OF
LES CINQ
DOIGTS. THE
FIVE FINGERS.

THE
RÉSEAU'S
CLANDESTINE
UNIT.

I'M LE
MAJEUR.



WHY
ARE YOU
AFTER...

...BIG
BLACK
MEN?

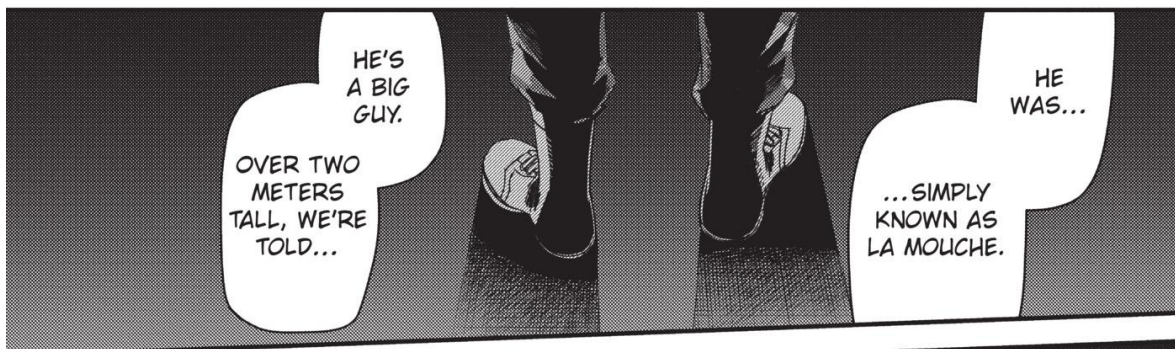
LE
MAJEUR.



I
SEE.

NOW WE
KNOW
WHAT TO
CALL YA.

NO
MORE
JANE
DOE FOR
YOU.



HE'S
A BIG
GUY.

OVER TWO
METERS
TALL, WE'RE
TOLD...

HE
WAS...

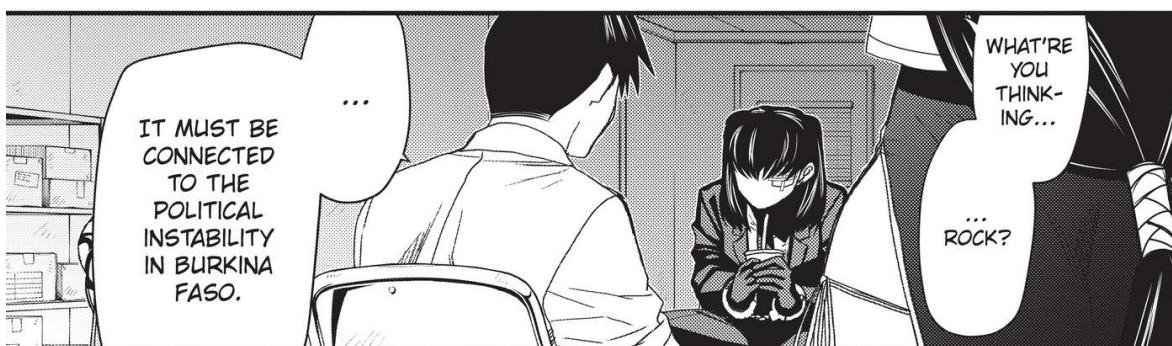
...SIMPLY
KNOWN AS
LA MOUCHE.



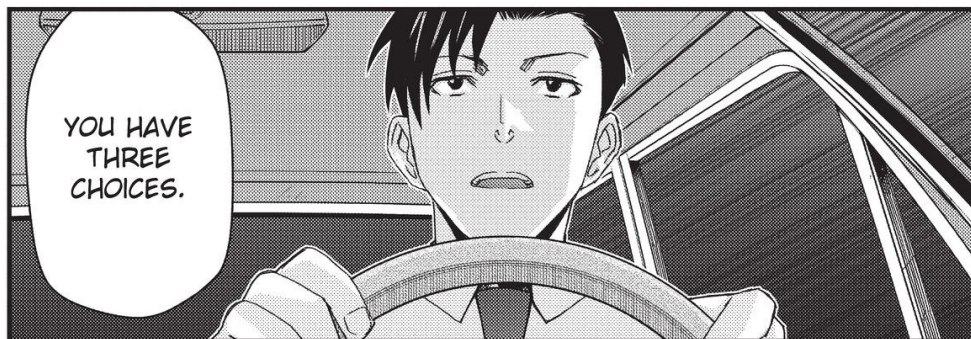
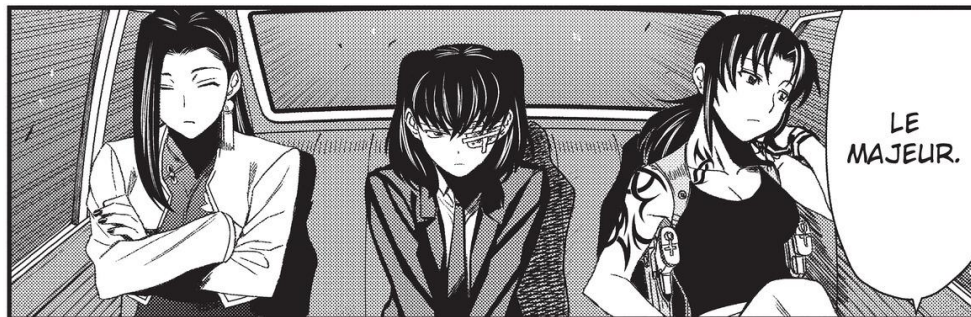
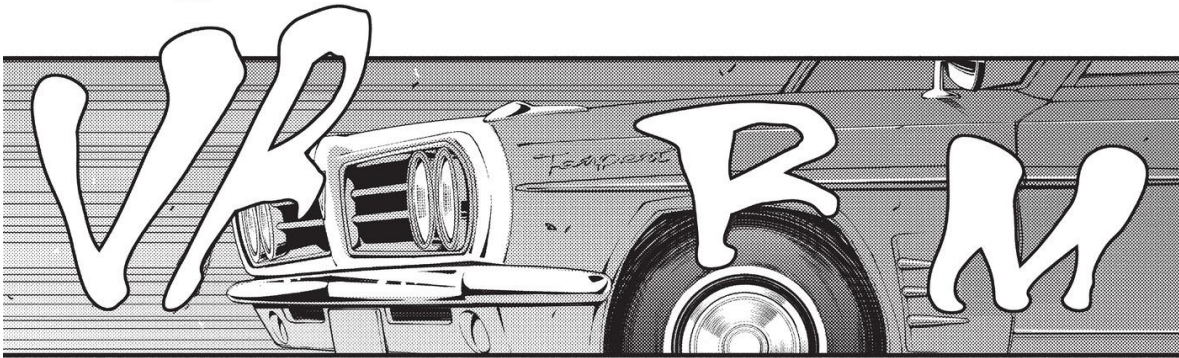
HE WAS IN
CHARGE OF
PROCURING
AND
MANAGING
FUNDS...

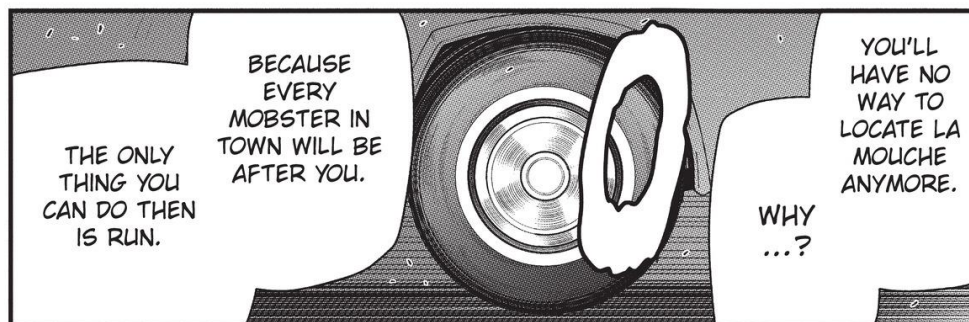
...FOR THE
ANTSIRABE
CONNECTION.

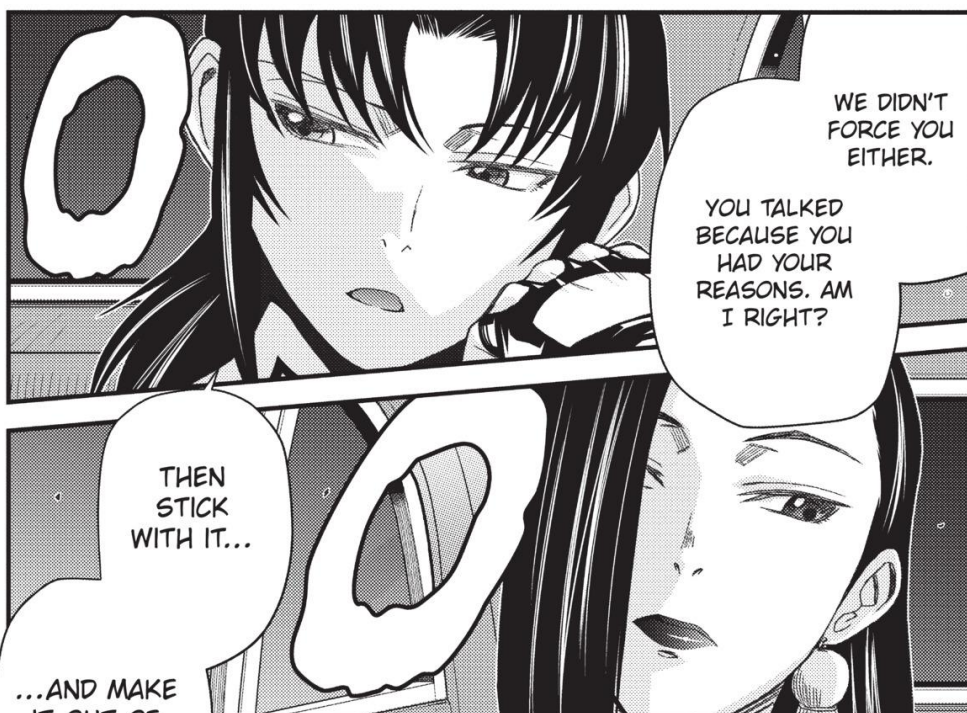
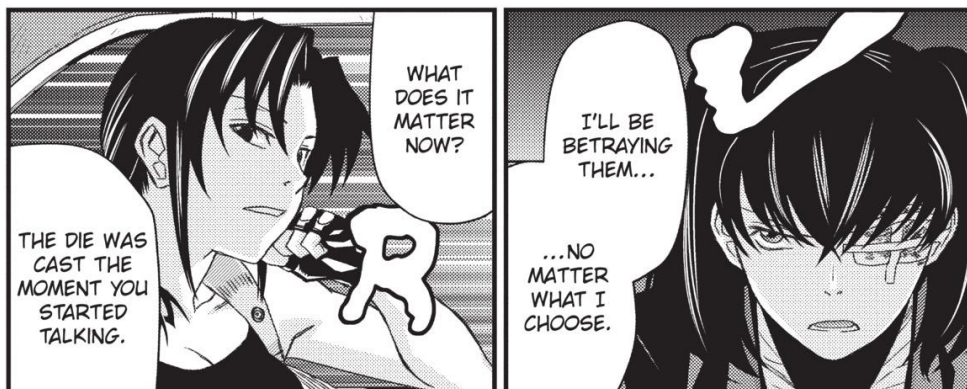
FORMER LT.
COLONEL OF
THE ARMY
OF BURKINA
FASO.



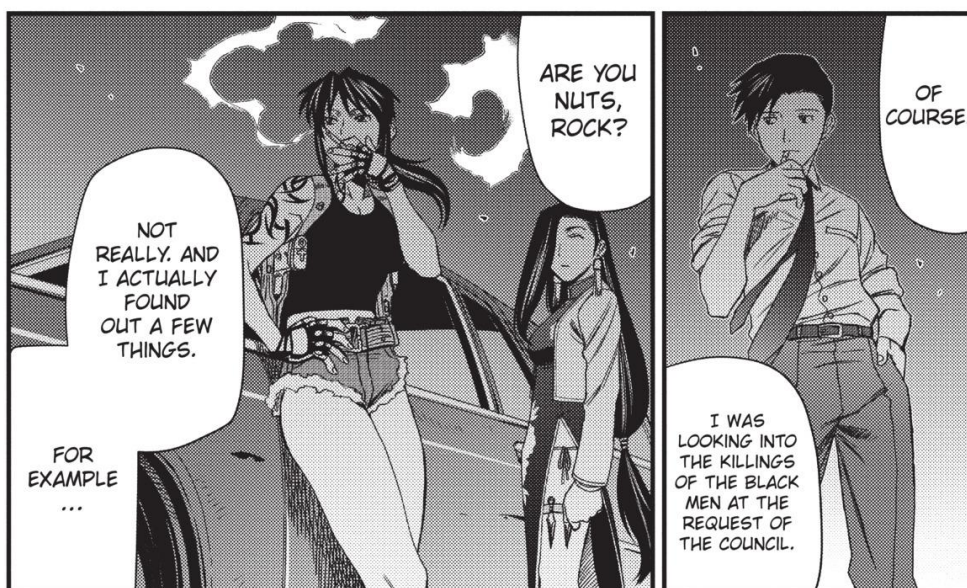


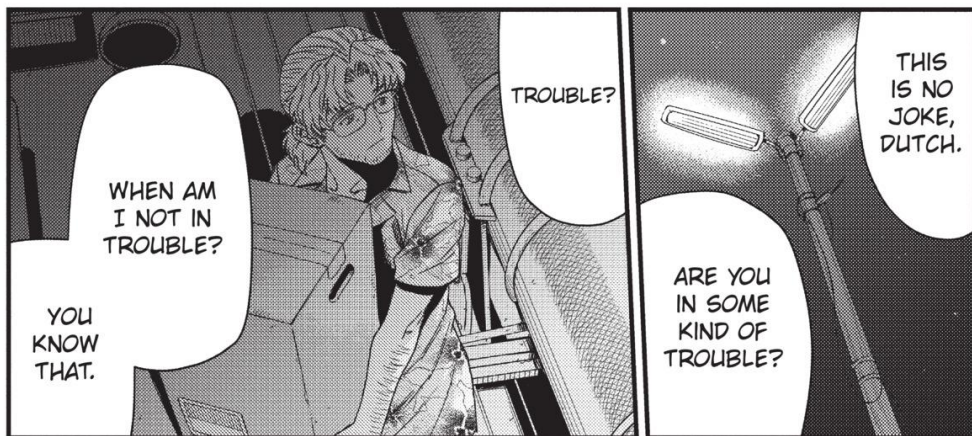
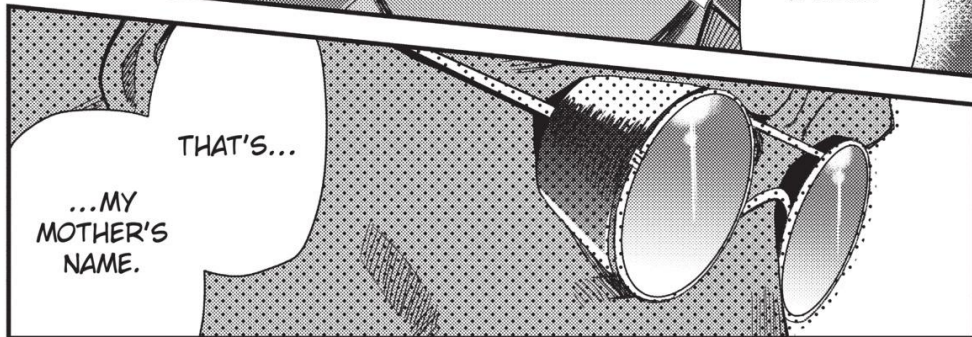
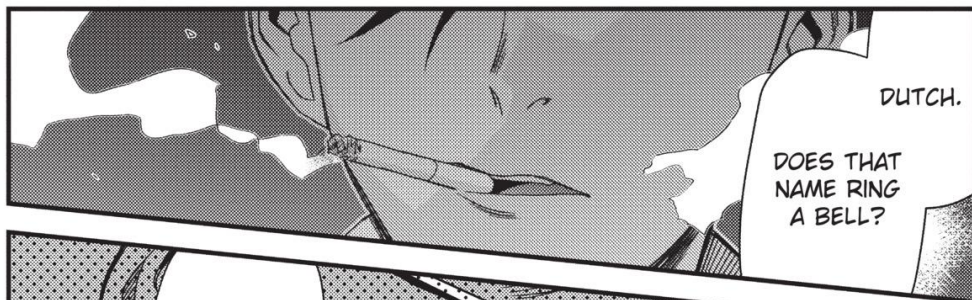














WE'RE A
TEAM...
RIGHT?

DUTCH.



BUT LET
ME GIVE
YOU A
WORD OF
ADVICE.

A TEAM,
HUH...

THAT
SOUNDS
PRETTY
GOOD.



I PRY
OPEN THE
IMPOSSIBLE.
NO
MATTER
HOW
ABSURD
IT MAY
SEEM.

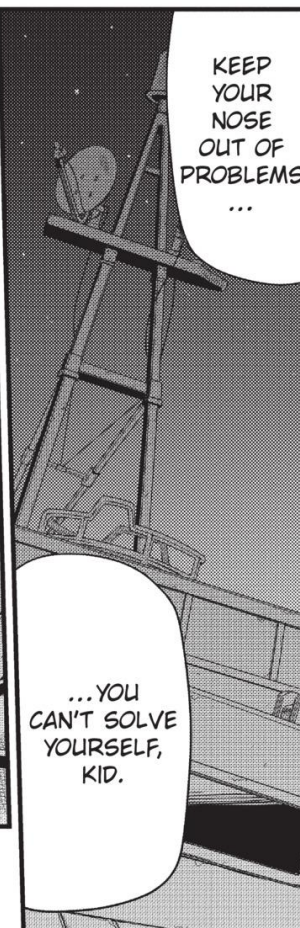
DON'T
YOU
KNOW?



HMPH
...

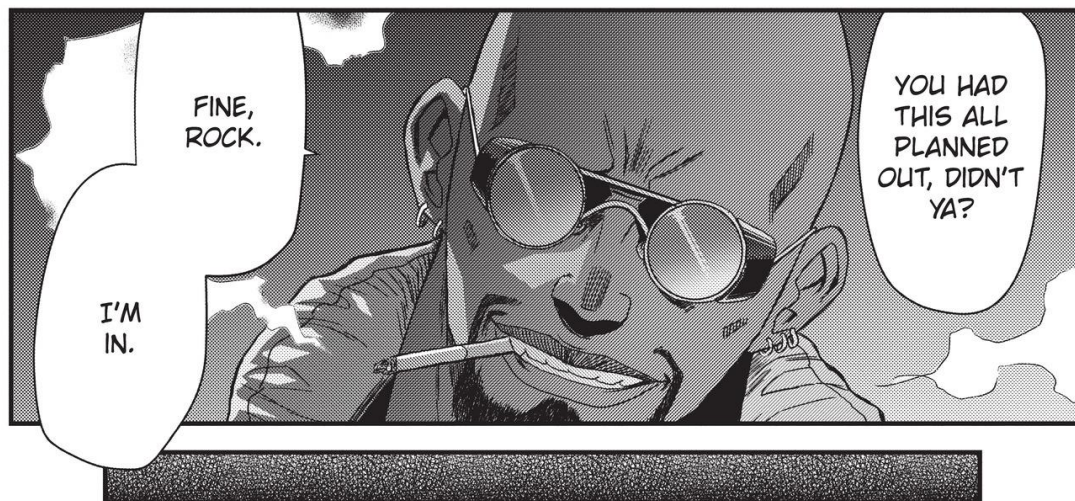
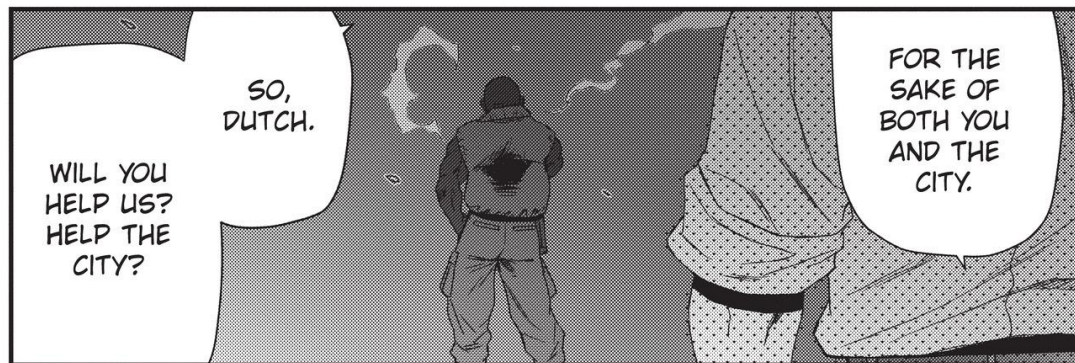
NOW
YOU'RE
TALKIN'
LIKE A
MAN.

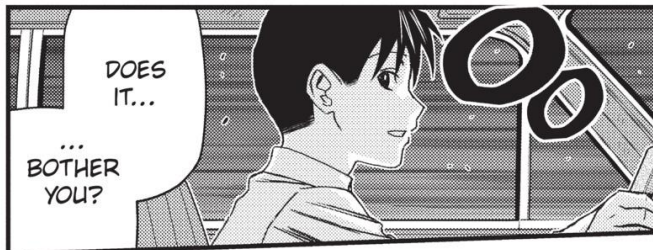
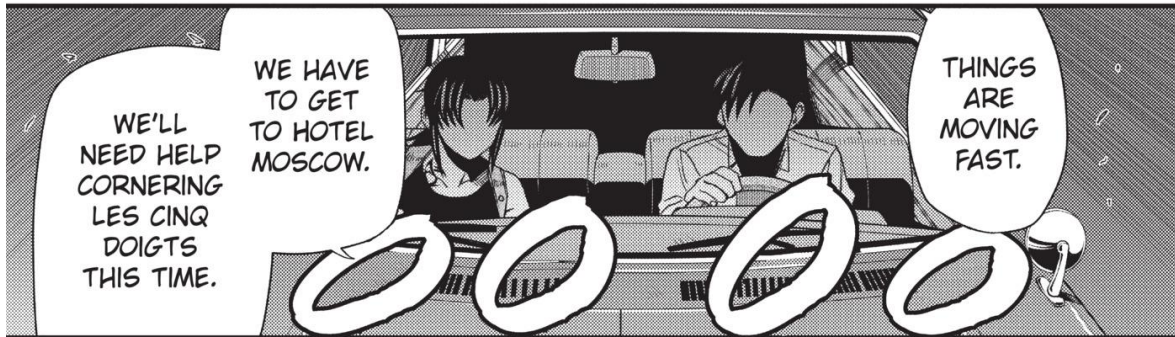
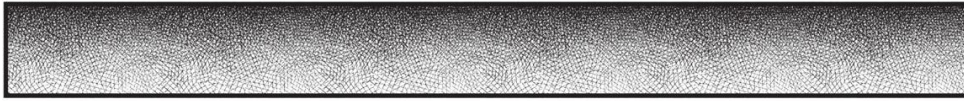
LIKE YOU
GOT BIG,
HEAVY
BALLS OF
STEEL.

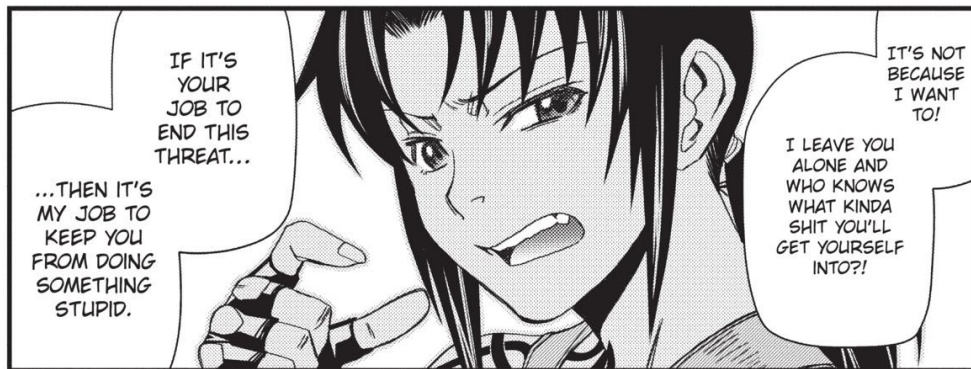
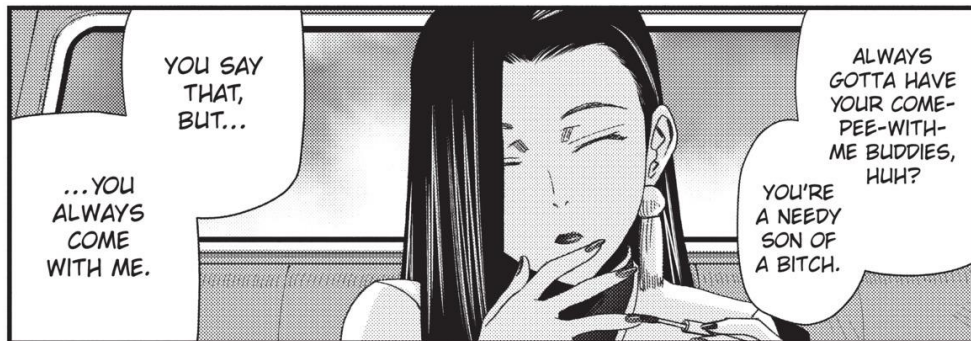
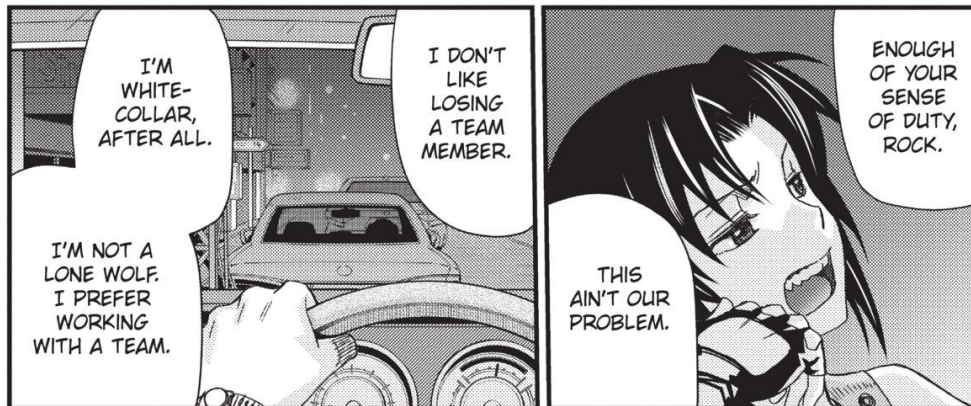


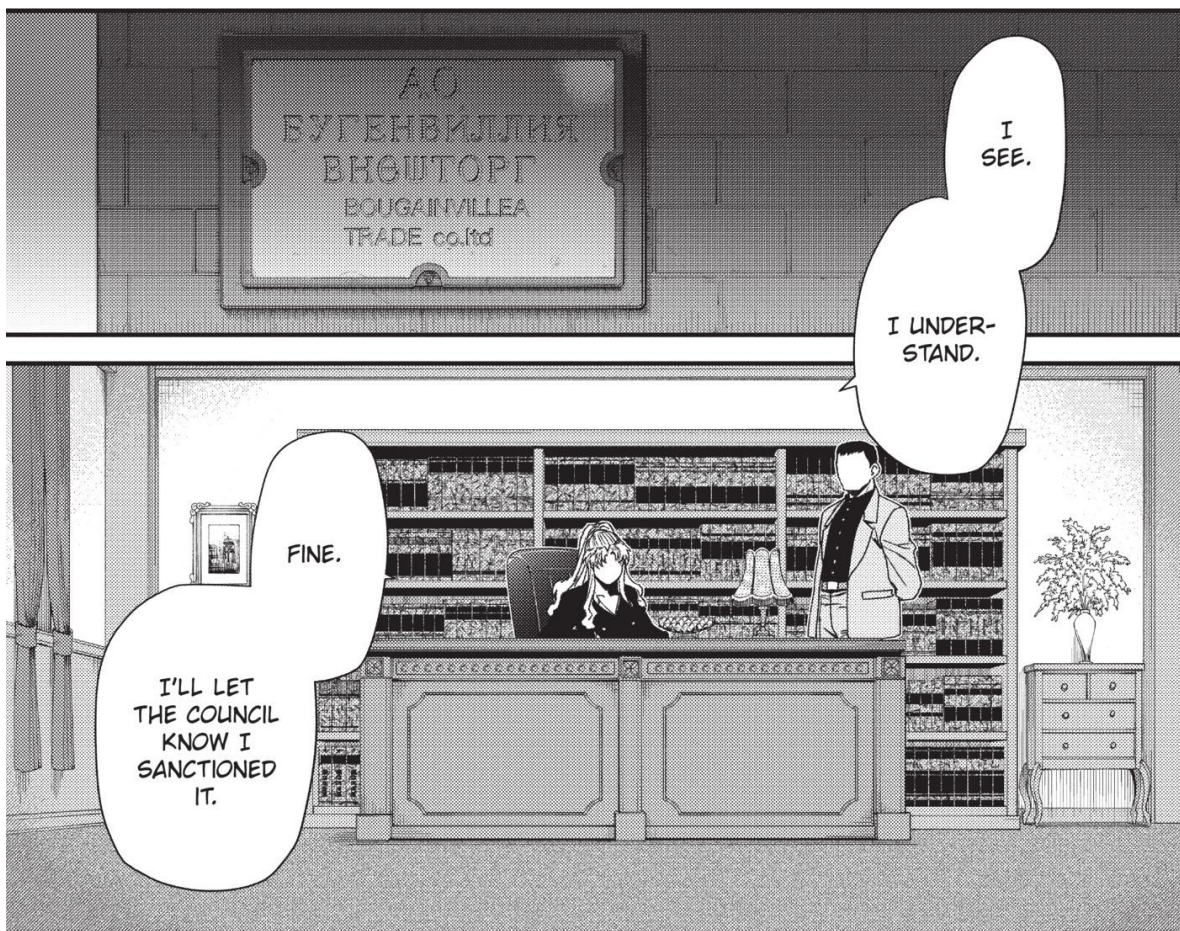
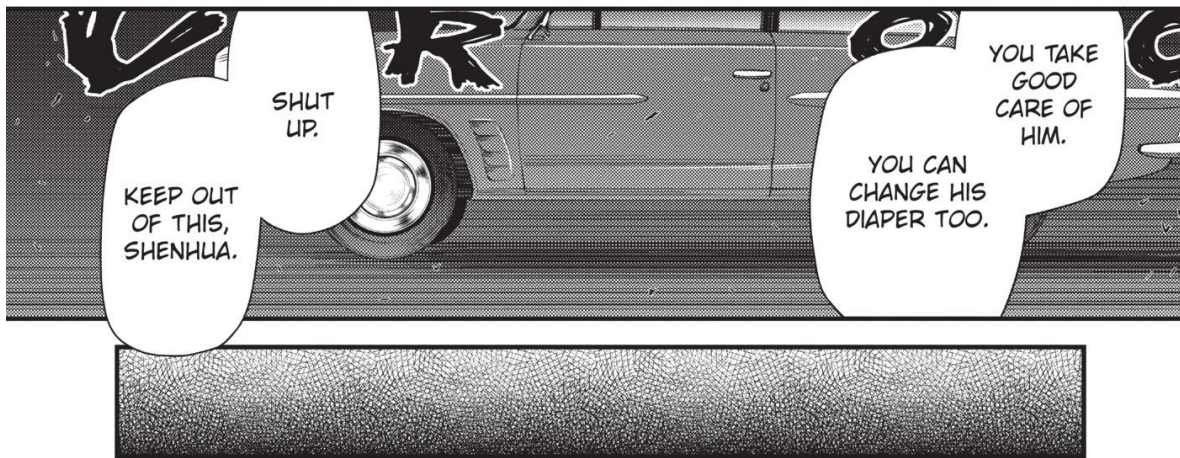
KEEP
YOUR
NOSE
OUT OF
PROBLEMS
...

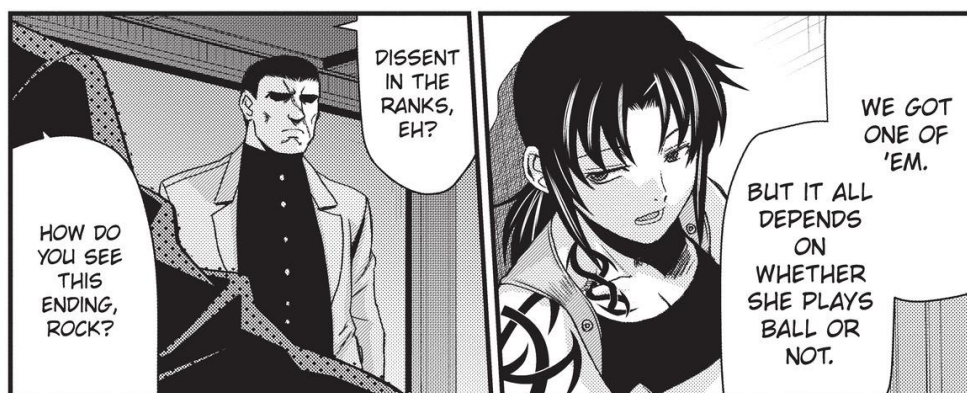
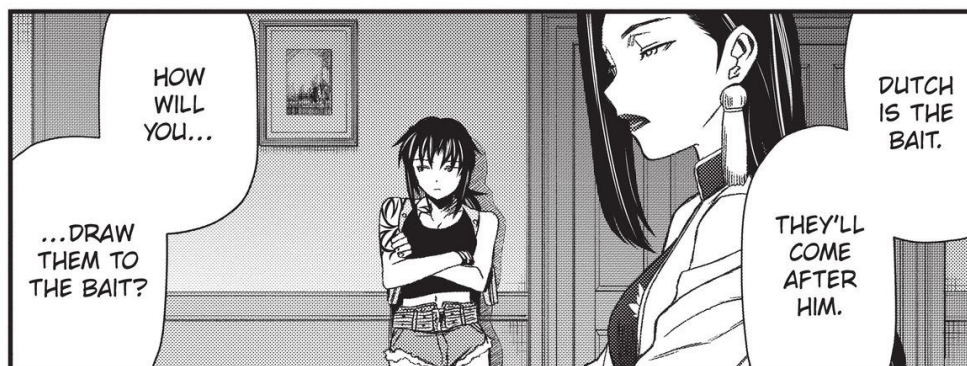
...YOU
CAN'T SOLVE
YOURSELF,
KID.



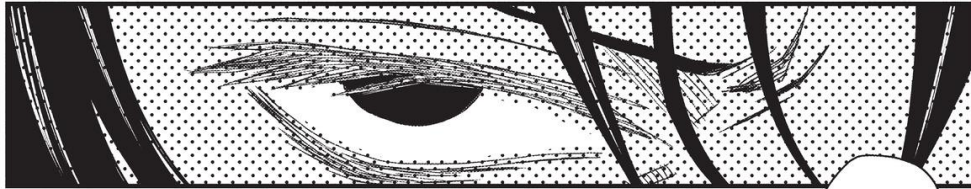
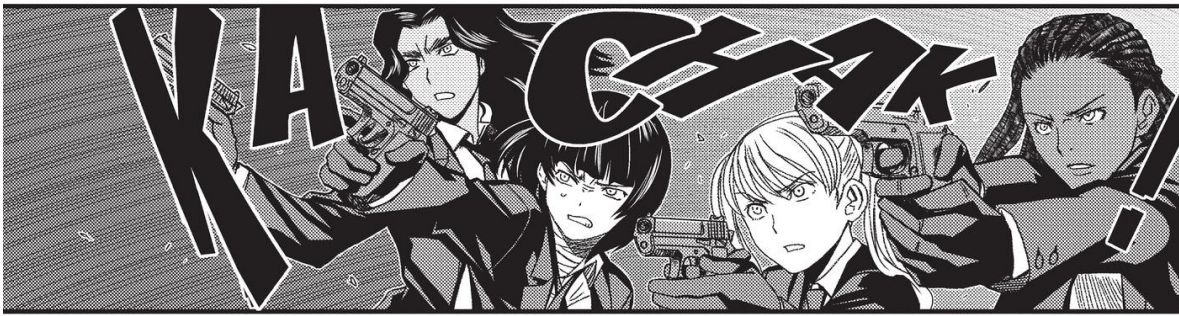








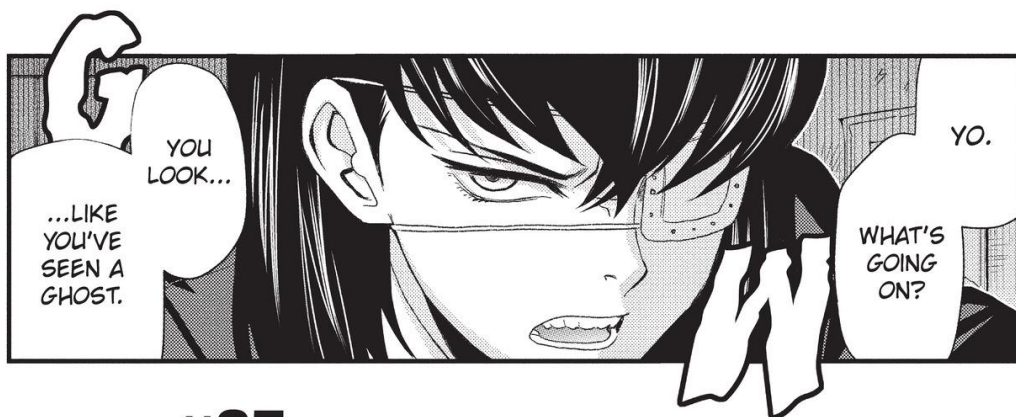




YO.

WHAT'S
GOING
ON?

YOU LOOK
LIKE YOU'VE
SEEN A
GHOST.



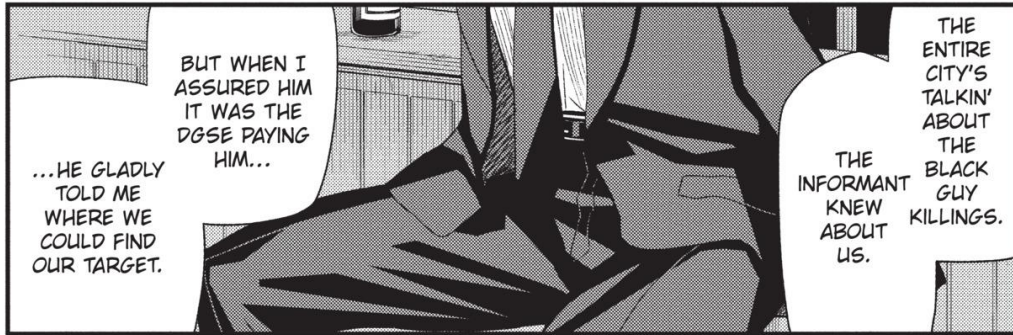
#85

L'Homme Sombre Pt. 8









...HE GLADLY
TOLD ME
WHERE WE
COULD FIND
OUR TARGET.

BUT WHEN I
ASSURED HIM
IT WAS THE
DGSE PAYING
HIM...

THE
ENTIRE
CITY'S
TALKIN'
ABOUT
THE
BLACK
GUY
KILLINGS.

THE
INFORMANT
KNEW
ABOUT
US.



I'LL LOSE
THIS EYE
IF I DON'T
GET PROPER
TREATMENT.

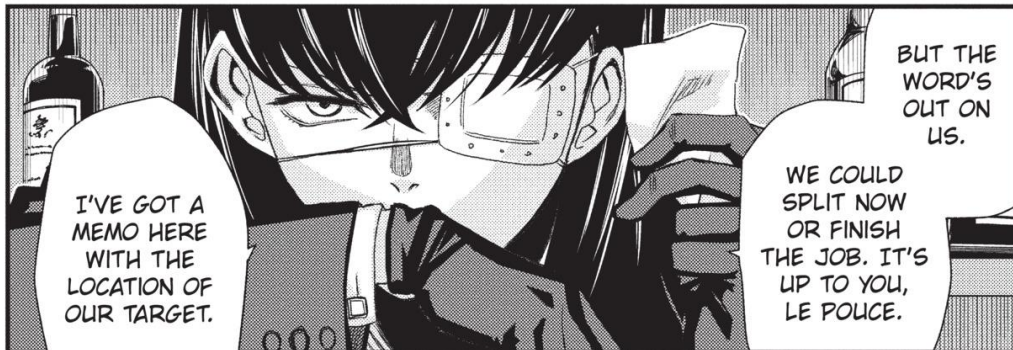
HEY.

I WANNA GET
THIS OVER
WITH AND
HEAD BACK
TO FRANCE.



...TO DO
ALL THAT
WITH YOUR
INJURED
EYE.

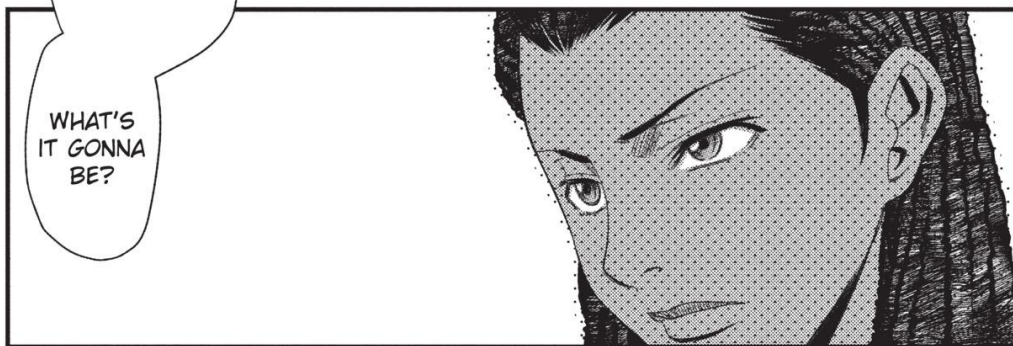
I'M
SURPRISED
YOU WERE
ABLE...



I'VE GOT A
MEMO HERE
WITH THE
LOCATION OF
OUR TARGET.

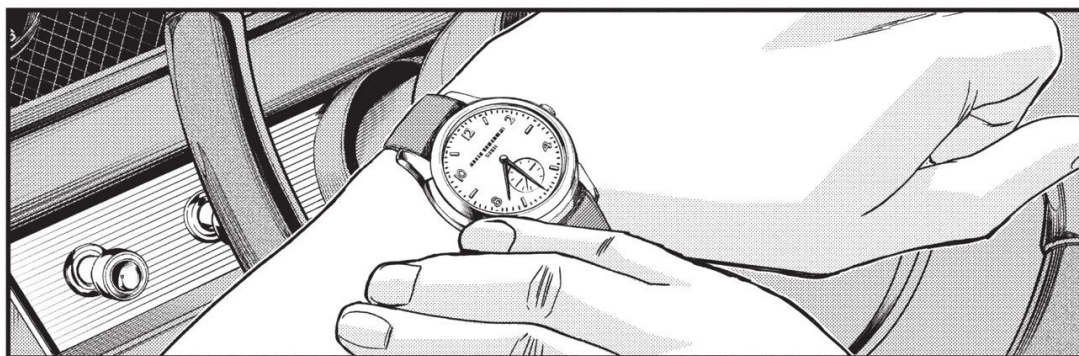
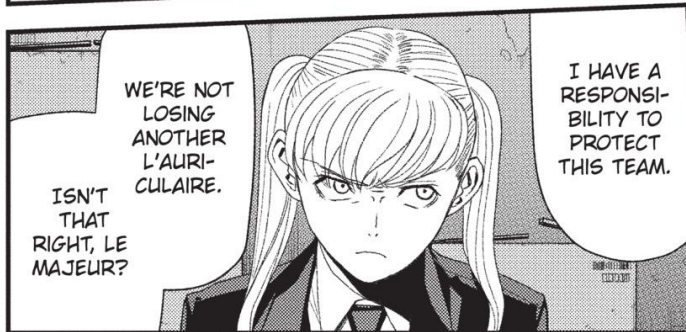
BUT THE
WORD'S
OUT ON
US.

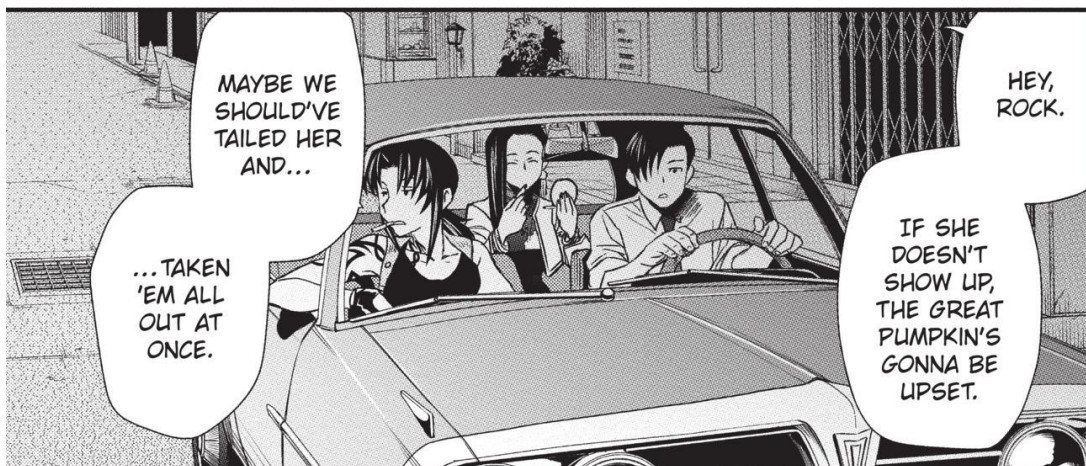
WE COULD
SPLIT NOW
OR FINISH
THE JOB. IT'S
UP TO YOU,
LE POUCE.



WHAT'S
IT GONNA
BE?





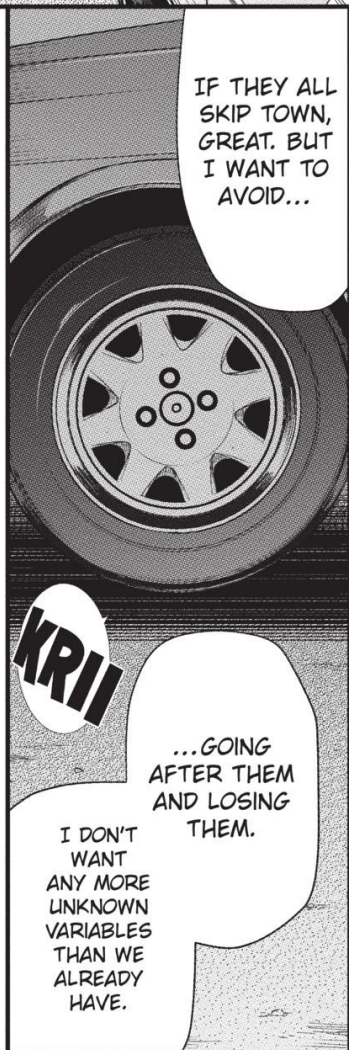


MAYBE WE SHOULD'VE
TAILED HER
AND...

HEY,
ROCK.

...TAKEN
'EM ALL
OUT AT
ONCE.

IF SHE
DOESN'T
SHOW UP,
THE GREAT
PUMPKIN'S
GONNA BE
UPSET.



IF THEY ALL
SKIP TOWN,
GREAT. BUT
I WANT TO
AVOID...

KRII

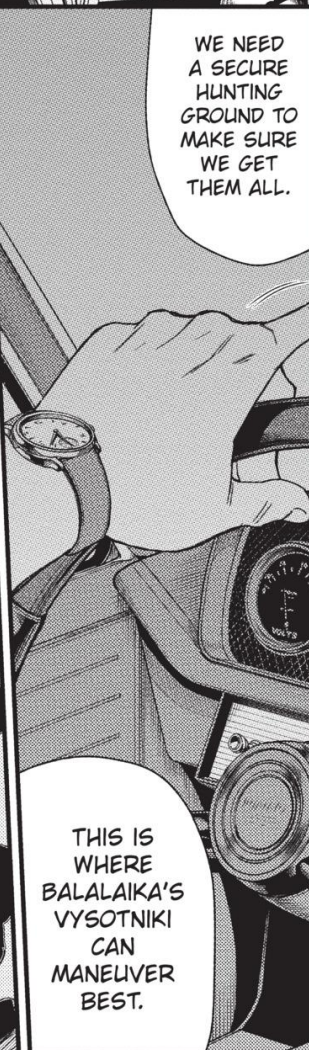
...GOING
AFTER THEM
AND LOSING
THEM.

I DON'T
WANT
ANY MORE
UNKNOWN
VARIABLES
THAN WE
ALREADY
HAVE.



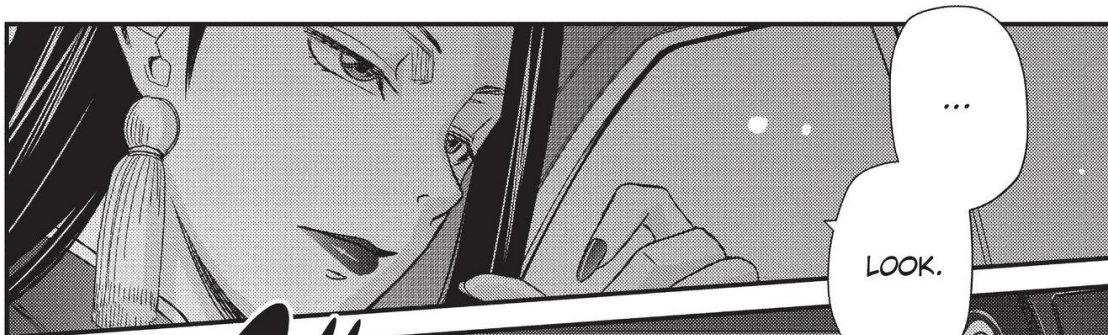
A COMPLETE
STERILIZATION,
HUH.

NO LOOSE
ENDS. I
LIKE THE
WAY YOU
THINK.

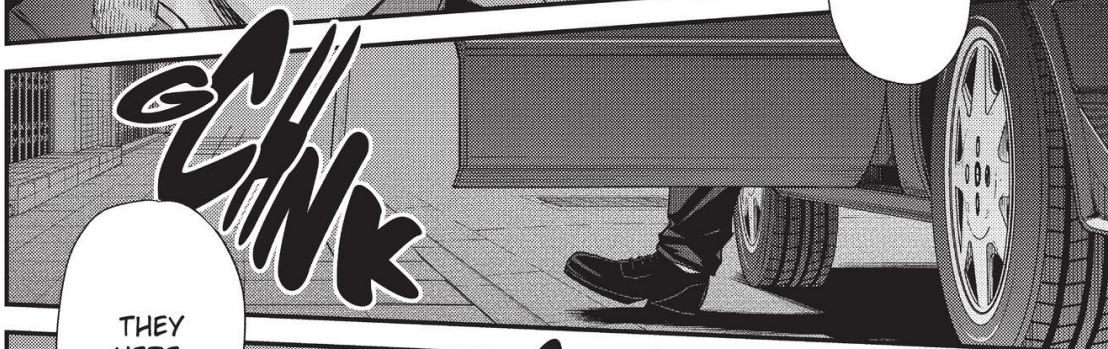


WE NEED
A SECURE
HUNTING
GROUND TO
MAKE SURE
WE GET
THEM ALL.

THIS IS
WHERE
BALALAIKA'S
VYSOTNIKI
CAN
MANEUVER
BEST.



LOOK.



THEY'RE ALL HERE.



DUTCH IS
INSIDE.

IT ALL
COMES
DOWN
TO...

...THE
ACTORS IN
PLAY NOW.



L'AURI-
CULAIRE
?

ME
NEITHER.

HE HASN'T
SHOWN
HIMSELF.



YOU GOT
EYES ON
TARGET
?

DON'T SEE
ANYBODY
THAT
FITS THE
DESCRIP-
TION.



LE
POLICE.

IT'S
L'INDEX.





LA
MOUCHE.

I HOPE
THIS ENDS
WITH YOU.

IT'S TIME
YOU JOIN
YOUR
FRIENDS.

LA
MOUCHE
OF
BURKINA
FASO.







IT'S AN
AMBUSH!

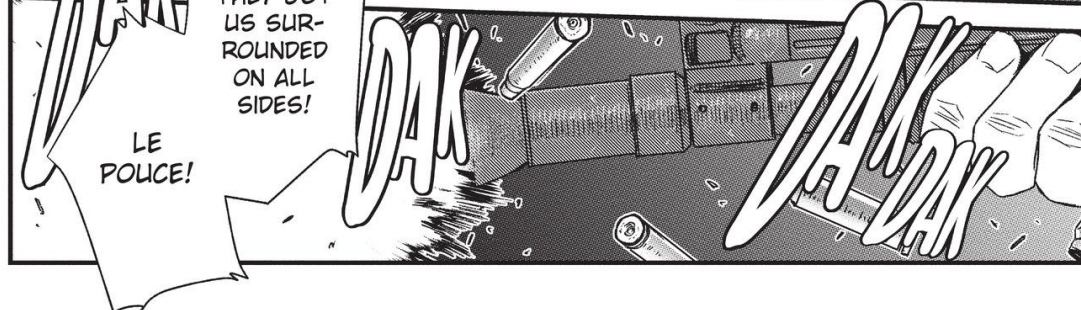
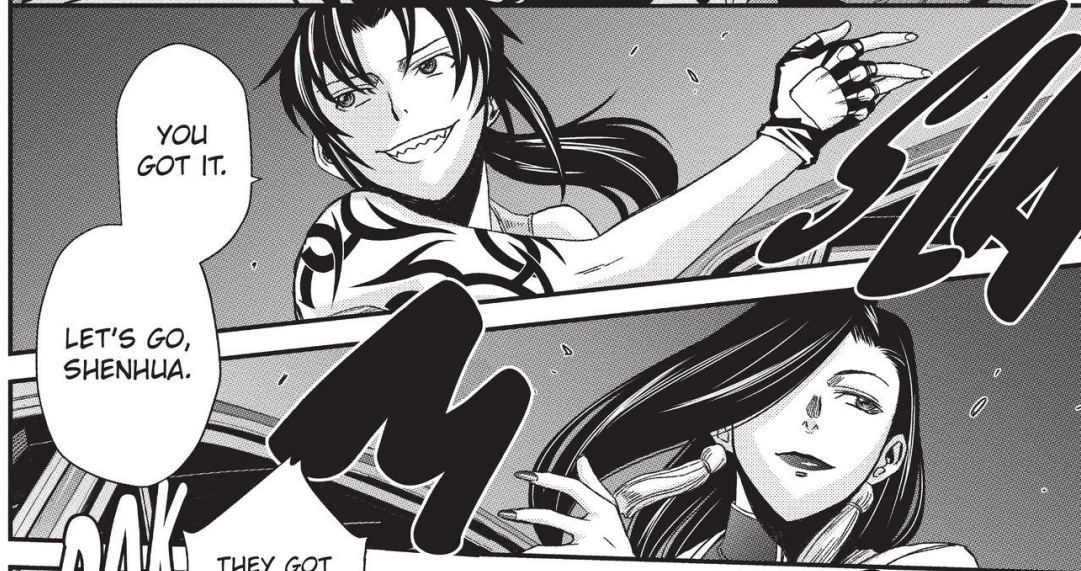
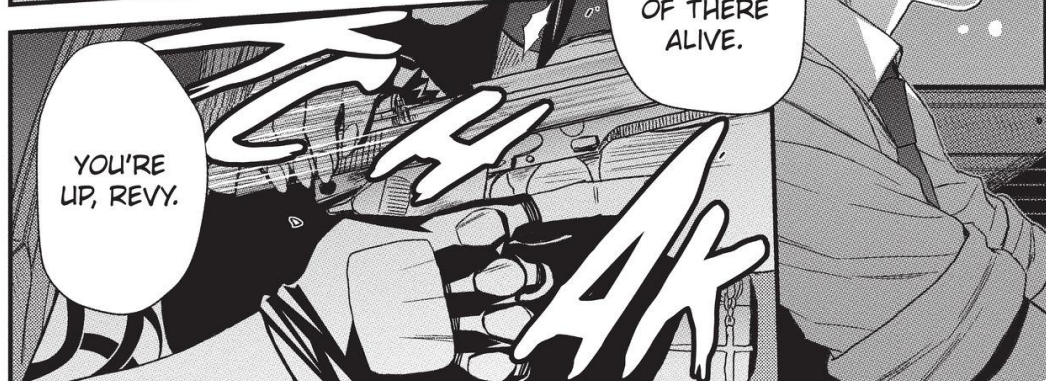
BLAM BLAM

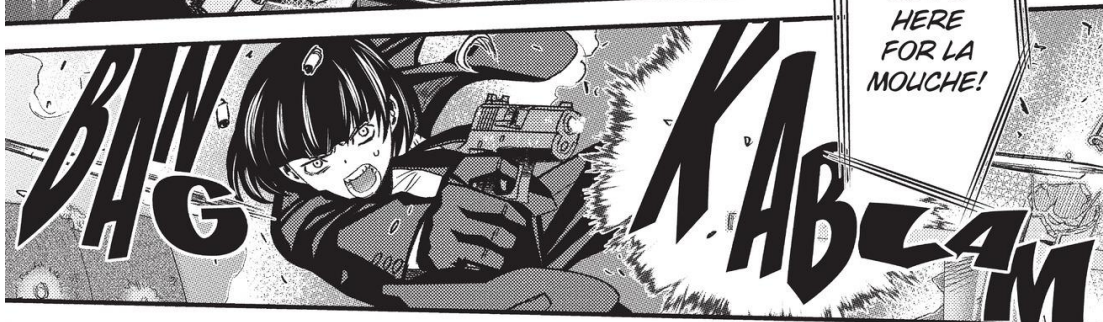
KAM

L'INDEX,
L'ANNULAIRE!

SECURE
US A WAY
OUT!

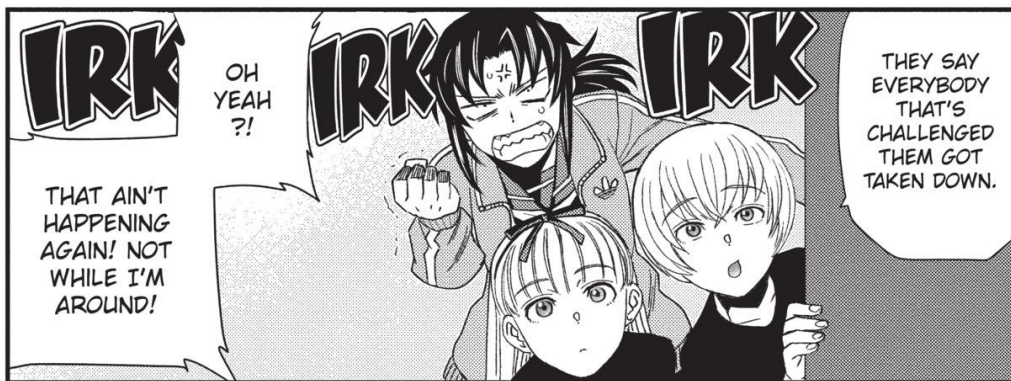
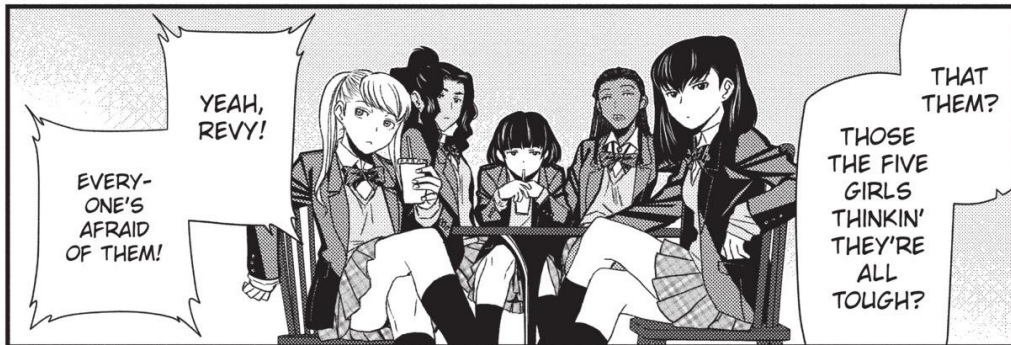






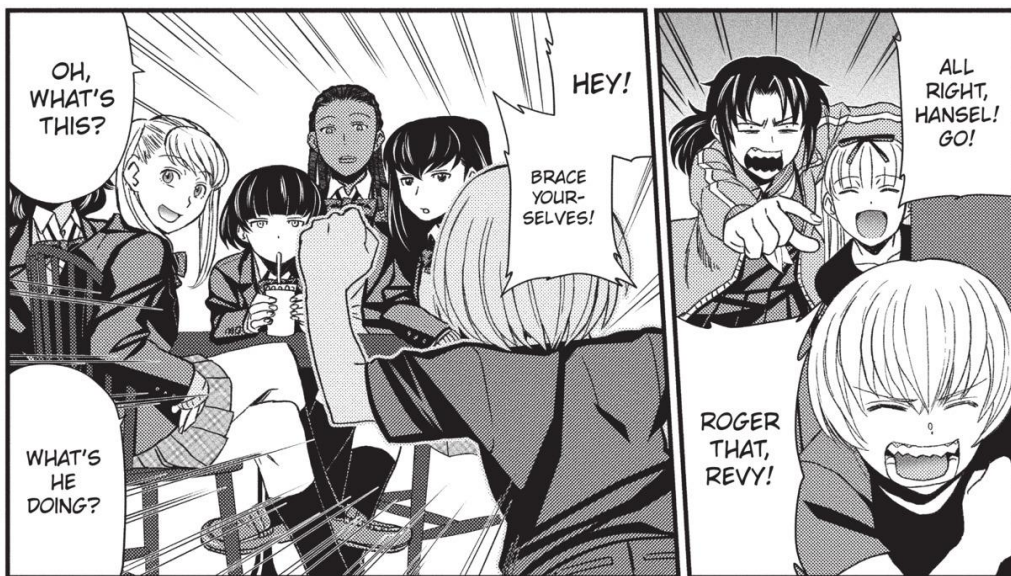


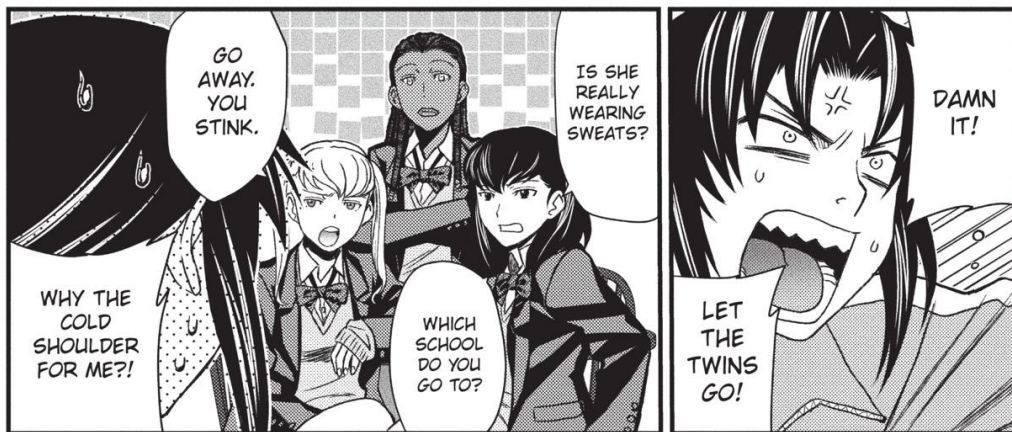
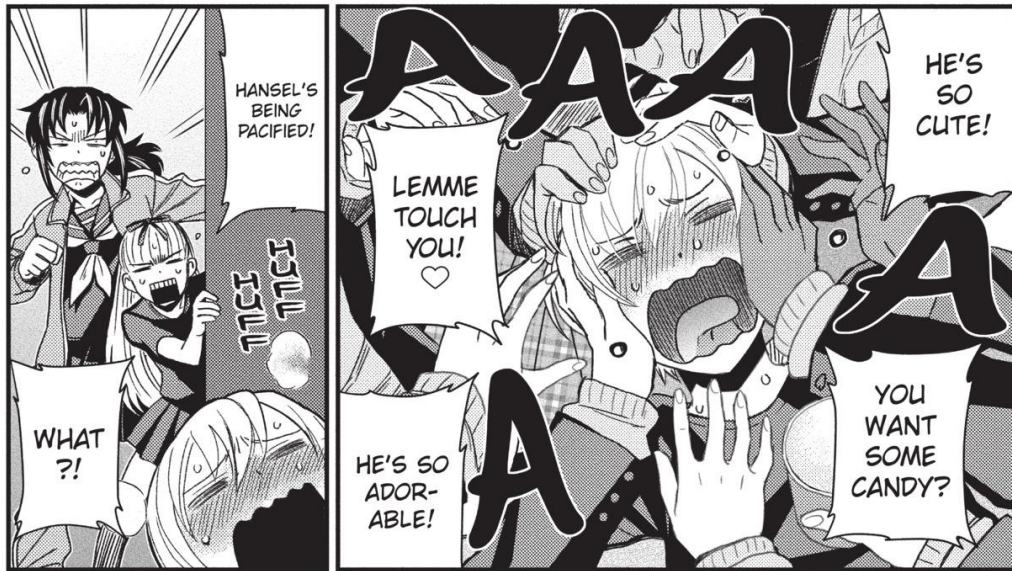
Black Lagoon Volume 12 -The End-

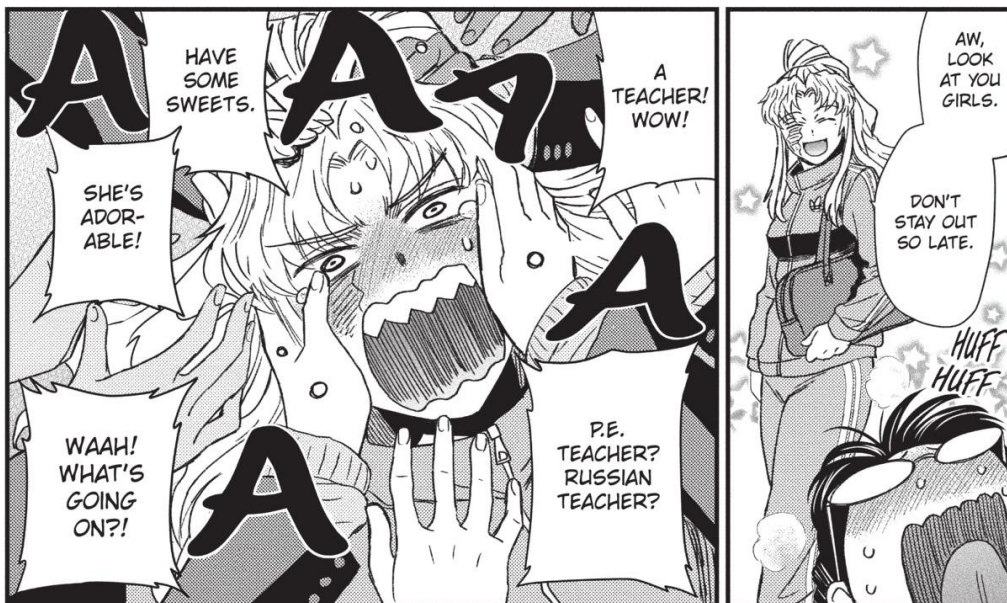
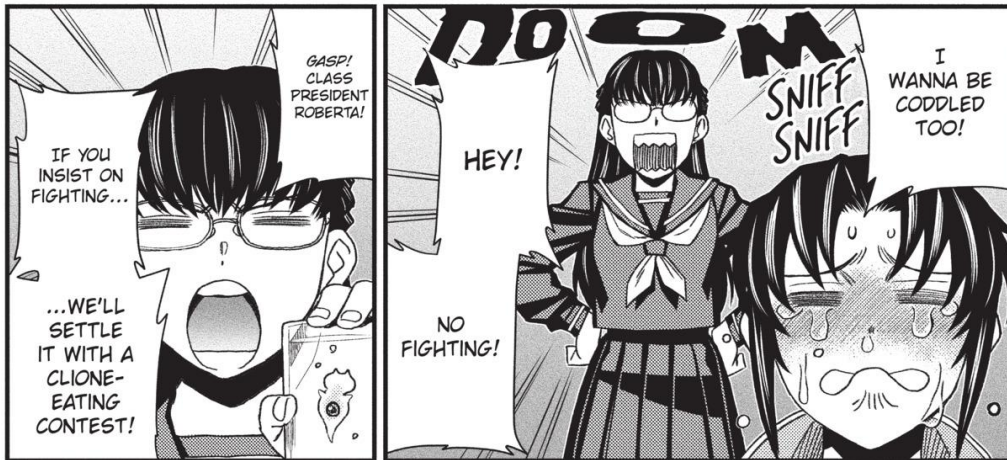


BLACK LAGOON THE HIGH SCHOOL EPISODE PART 2

BY REI HIROE









AFTERWORD

VOLUME 12 IS OUT! YAY! THERE WAS A LONG TIME IN BETWEEN VOLUMES, BUT AT LEAST IT WAS RELEASED BEFORE THE OLYMPICS. PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT I'M CONCURRENTLY WORKING ON 341 SENTODAN FOR MONTHLY SHONEN SUNDAY. THIS STORY DOESN'T CONCLUDE WITH THIS VOLUME, SO I'LL NEED TO GET THE NEXT VOLUME OUT SOON...

I HOPED TO INCLUDE THE CONCLUSION, BUT THERE WAS A RISK IT WOULDN'T BE DONE IN TIME FOR THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY (AS OF 2021). ANYWAY, I'LL KEEP WORKING ON IT AT A RELAXED PACE, SO PLEASE BE PATIENT.

I'VE BEEN ENJOYING GOING TO THE SAUNA BECAUSE IT HELPS ME GET MY MIND OFF ALL KINDS OF THINGS. I HEAR THE ARTIST FOR ATTACK ON TITAN IS A SAUNA MAN AS WELL. I HOPE HE BUILDS ONE. THEN I'LL SPEND MY RETIREMENT MANAGING IT. BUT BEFORE I DO THAT, THERE ARE A FEW MORE MOUNTAINS I'D LIKE TO CONQUER.

WELL, I'LL SEE YOU IN VOLUME 13!

THANKS/COOPERATION:

EDITOR/MR. NATSUME (MR. WOO X)
ASSISTANT/ITAGO (TONE MASTER), MORIMOTO, IZUMIDA,
HAMAKAWA

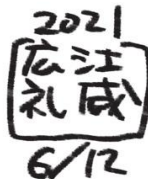
ENGLISH TRANSLATION/DANIEL KANEMITSU

COLORING/TORATETSU YAMANAKA

SETTING AUTHENTICITY ASSISTANCE/HARUICHI SHIRATO
MILITARY-RELATED ASSISTANCE/JENYA

AND WAKO-SHINJUKU-GUMI ZANTO

I'LL SEE YOU



IN VOLUME 13.

20 years have flown by...

LOSER'S HORIZON

REI HIROE

The Eternal Loser. Manga artist, occasional illustrator. His war-themed manga *341 Sentodan* is serialized in *Monthly Shonen Sunday*. Story and original character designer for *Re: Creator*.

TAC

Toy, figure, and hobby writer for the *Sunday GX* column *Hobby Yokochō Plus 1*. Always looking for work.

A mundane column where Rei Hiroe, his editor, and writer TAC talk about what's on their minds.

Originally published in the *Sunday GX* April 2021 issue celebrating the 20th anniversary of *Black Lagoon* edited as a comic version.

GX EDITOR T

Editor for bullet and gun smoke-filled titles such as *Black Lagoon*, *Sawyer the Cleaner*, *RED SUN Inc.*, *Wilderness*, *Destro 016*, and others.

We talk about our copious memories from start to finish!!

I love those scenes in American movies where important calls are made on pay phones.

T☆: It'll be self-torture if we dig deeper into that so let's move on. It's the 20th anniversary so I'd like to talk about the setting of the story. We touched on it in the last *Loser's Horizon*, but it takes place in the mid-90s, right?

Hiroe: That's right.

T☆: The date isn't specified, but the U-boat arc in volume 2 took place 50 years after 1945, so that would make it 1995¹. Also, *Movimiento Quinta República*², the impetus for the Roberta's Revenge arc in volume 6, took place in 1997³ so we can tell a few years have passed in between. It's interesting how the story follows the times.

Hiroe: But the real-life events in the story are arbitrary. (LOL)

GX: The mercenary company E.O. (Extra Order) that's after the Lagoon Traders in the one-shot #0 are now widely known as PMCs (private military companies), but at the time they were uncommon.

GX:

First off, as of April 2021, *Black Lagoon*, starting from the one-shot #0, has reached its 20th anniversary. Congratulations!

T☆: Congratulations!

Hiroe: Although I did take about eight years off in there.

GX: You said the same thing in the last *Loser's Horizon* so I checked and that wasn't the case. You took a hiatus from the magazine between 2010 and 2013, so it was only three years off. There were five years between volumes 9 and 10, but it definitely wasn't eight years.

T☆: I guess for Hiroe Sensei it was a trying time that must have felt that long. Anyway, let's agree that 20 years is impressive...

GX: Twenty years and only 11 volumes!

Hiroe: That's terrible!



of Jane and her Nokia⁹. The cell phone models take me back to that era.

Hiroe: It's surprisingly difficult to identify what kinds of cell phones were being used in a particular time. I use pay phones in the story because I personally like them. I love those scenes in eighties and nineties American movies where important calls are made on pay phones.

T☆: Scenes of Dutch stooping over with that big body of his to talk on a pay phone are cool. It's like he's got something to hide from the other members of Lagoon Traders. There are lots of scenes where he'll leave the office to use a pay phone outside.

GX: Why did you choose the nineties as a setting?

Hiroe: When I started it, I thought we were entering a new era after the end of the Cold War¹⁰. Of course, that new era brought new problems, but I thought those problems would help shape the new order. By having it take place in 1995, I wanted to show a volatile era of chaos. To create characters who could only live in chaos and will eventually be eliminated as the world becomes more organized. But it turns out that the real world is so chaotic—there is no order. It's one chaotic mess after another!

T☆: There really could be a real-life Roanapur somewhere.

The U-Boat arc is where my doubts on how it would continue arose.

GX: Let's look back on the past 20 years and some of the major story lines. Let's begin with the one-shot.

GX: Extra Order was based on Executive Outcomes⁴ in South Africa.

Hiroe: Until then, we imagined mercenaries to be like the famous Mad Mike Hoare depicted in the movie *The Wild Geese*, but the laws of war and the laws of individual countries changed around this time. Loopholes in those laws helped companies like Executive Outcomes and Blackwater⁵ to form. They're like armed office workers who are willing to kill people.

GX: I wonder if they say stuff like "Director, back me up!" or "Section chief, fire!" when they're out in the field.

T☆: That could be a comedy sketch. (LOL) Did you always take things from reality to create your stories?

Hiroe: No. I began doing research when *Black Lagoon* was greenlit for serialization. If anything catches my attention, I'll read books on it. These days I'll use the internet, but sources on the internet may be unreliable, so I prefer finding the original source. After some time, I enlisted the help of Seiichi Shirato⁶ and Jugo Tsukuda⁷ for technical advice. I don't know what I'd do without them now.

T☆: The Japan arc had some familiar scenery so the time and place was easy to grasp.

Hiroe: You mean like Rock talking in a phone booth with pink flyers⁸ hanging in it? Those disappeared ten years later, didn't they?

T☆: The members of Lagoon Traders still don't carry cell phones. They still use pay phones. In the story, cell phones are only used by mob bosses with the exception





BY HAVING IT TAKE PLACE IN 1995, I WANTED TO SHOW A VOLATILE ERA OF CHAOS. (HIROE)

T☆: He was incorrigible. (LOL)

Hiroe: It was like extending a helping hand to an abandoned dog, but all it would do is knit its brow and growl.

GX: For those who don't know, in chapter 2 of the U-Boat arc, from around when Rock begins questioning Revy, Hiroe began having a hard time. He began missing his deadlines...

T☆: You mean the "He sent his assistants home" incident? (LOL)

GX: I visited his workplace to check on the progress of the script and his assistants were all gone.

Hiroe: (LOL)

GX: When I asked him why, his response was, "I'm gonna miss the deadline anyway, so I sent them home." (LOL)

T☆: Oh, boy.

Hiroe: I thought, I wasn't going to finish it on time, so there was no point for them to be there. An editor for another magazine wouldn't hound me to meet my deadline. He'd just let me miss it like it was a routine.

Hiroe: I had fun doing it because I didn't feel any responsibility. (LOL) I figured there wouldn't be a follow-up.

GX: He had no faith in me... I heard you say that in *Loser's Horizon* and in other interviews. (LOL)

T☆: That's so typical of him. (LOL) He had a string of canceled series before that, so he was like an abandoned dog that no longer trusted humans...

Hiroe: It wasn't personal, I just lost hope in everything. I became resigned to whatever happened. (LOL)

T☆: *Black Lagoon* starts one year after the one-shot, right?

GX: I asked him to make it into a series, but I wasn't sure how. When Rock quits his job at the end of #0, the story kind of ended beautifully like a movie.

Hiroe: True. The U-Boat arc is where my doubts on how it would continue arose.

T☆: That was also around the time you two had your first disagreement, right? Like Rock and Revy in the story.

GX: Another classic Rei Hiroe story. (LOL) He wouldn't open up to me. He kept moping, "Even if the comics are released, no one's gonna buy it."



LOSER'S HORIZON

GX: Revy's gunplay scenes, but also the cigarette kiss was memorable too. A lot of fans still choose that as their favorite scene. How did you come up with that?

Hiroe: I wanted the reconciliation process to be slightly sexual. It's not unheard of for smokers to light each other's cigarettes like that.

GX: We struggled with it. But by expressing it sexually, I think it ended up being a wonderful scene.

Depicting the ghost of the Soviet Union was a big thing for me.

T☆: How did the Roberta arc, which takes place before the U-Boat arc, come about?

Hiroe: Roberta came about because I was asked to hurry up and introduce a flamboyant character. (LOL)

GX: We talked about not wanting to hold back.

Hiroe/GX: (Simultaneously) Do it before we're canceled!

T☆: Another classic *Black Lagoon* story. (LOL)

Hiroe: Roberta's considered the very first fighting maid¹¹ character. Although, I think there were characters like Roberta before her.

T☆: The umbrella with a gun thing was used in *Kingsman*¹². Do you think the Twins arc was a continuation of the Roberta arc?

GX: I got so angry, I said, "I'll decide whether you miss a deadline or not, so get your assistants back in here!" I told him I wasn't leaving until the assistants came back to work.

Hiroe: I reluctantly called them and asked them to come back.

GX: It was tit for tat, but I was young back then too... We ended up meeting the deadline though. It was around this time when the first volume was going to be reprinted that he started opening up to me. He began consulting me on all kinds of things. (LOL)

Hiroe: The abandoned dog was now approaching the hand that was extended to him. (LOL)

T☆: (LOL) Let's get back to *Black Lagoon*. It was inside the U-boat where Revy began bitching so matter-of-factly, I feel like this is where the character took on a life of her own.

Hiroe: I felt like if they kept going the way they were, they'd have a fatal falling-out since they had such different values. If I controlled her for my sake, the sake of the author, it would've been contrived. I wanted to avoid that. Having said that, the series would've ended if Revy shot Rock. I really struggled with that story.

GX: I was really taken aback when he said the main character would die if things kept going the way they were. Even I thought Revy would shoot him. Not a warning shot, but a fatal one. We struggled to come up with a way to resolve that without skirting the issue.

T☆: Thanks to that, a classic scene was born.



AS A MILITARY GEEK, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A RUSSIAN FREAK.

GX: Why a female character?

Hiroe: Simply because I thought it'd be better to see a woman's butt. Her scars are totally my fetish too. I've loved female characters with scars since I drew Grimalkin von Stieber in *Hisuikyokitan*¹⁷.

GX: A pretty daring choice for a manga in 2000. Were you always knowledgeable about the Russian military?

Hiroe: As a military geek, I've always been a Russian freak too. (LOL) I became interested after watching *Red Dawn*¹⁸. Most military geeks that are into the Russians got into it from that movie! Who wouldn't want to see the Soviet Union invade the US? (LOL) As a kid, I always imagined the Soviet Union as a powerful and terrifying country with a completely different way of thinking.

T☆: A lot of people saw the Soviet Union that way during the Cold War.

Hiroe: When I actually looked into the Soviet Union, it wasn't like that at all. (LOL) It was a country just like any other. Yet it kept being portrayed as a terrifying, evil empire in films.

GX: I'm guessing there weren't many resources for you to draw on back then.

Hiroe: Viktor Suvorov's *Inside the Soviet Army*¹⁹ was my bible.

GX: You used to say the concept was a cosplay battle manga with iconic characters with special fighting power.

Hiroe: The twins were taken from *The Shining*¹³. It was my lazy idea to have them carry guns to make them moe, but they ended up being pretty vicious. That's reality.

T☆: Kids having to carry guns in it is unfortunate in itself. They do face an unfortunate end as well.

GX: Surprisingly, those kinds of themes surrounding violence are explored pretty consistently in *Black Lagoon*.

T☆: You guys really dug deep into Balalaika's character in the Twins arc too.

GX: Did you have any particularly strong feelings in creating Balalaika's character?

Hiroe: Depicting the ghost of the Soviet Union¹⁴ was a big thing for me. The Russian mafia¹⁵ was most active in the nineties too, so I wanted to incorporate that.

GX: What do you mean by the ghost of the Soviet Union?

Hiroe: People that became outlaws as the Soviet Union collapsed. That was fascinating to me. Like in *Battles Without Honor and Humanity*¹⁶. As I watched the Afghan invasion and the collapse of the Soviet Union in real time, I figured there had to be people like that.



LOSER'S HORIZON

Hiroe: Because when you think of the mafia, you think of Hong Kong. (LOL) Also, there was the film *Year of the Dragon*²⁴. If there was going to be a mafia council, I thought the Hong Kong mafia should be a part of it. I even read books on the Chinese mafia to build an organizational chart and stuff.

GX: Why did you make him an ex-cop?

Hiroe: Because I thought that would make him more interesting. (LOL) I have all kinds of backstories for Mr. Chang, but I haven't had the chance to show them. Especially since he's not the type to talk about himself.

GX: He seems to have opened up to Rock, so maybe he'll tell us soon.

T: I'd love to read that! You have to do it!

If Yukio was more violent than Balalaika.

T: Next up, the Japan arc. Yukio's death emotionally scarred me.

GX: We talked about having a story set in Japan at least once, since that's where Rock is from. Did you envision Yukio dying from the beginning?

Hiroe: I think so. I wrote it with the feeling that she's the kind of girl that would die.

GX: We discussed from early on that she was a stubborn girl. The kind of girl that wouldn't compromise even if compromise was an option.

Hiroe: Also, Balalaika was too formidable of a foe. Balalaika in the Japan arc is like a typhoon of violence.

Hiroe: The author was a general in the Soviet Army who defected to the US during the Cold War. He wrote a book on the inner workings of the Soviet military and it became a best seller. Looking back at it now, he was wrong about a lot of things, but he wrote that the Soviets were preparing to send Spetsnaz²⁰ operatives to the US to cause an uprising if needed. That got me so excited. (LOL) But once western TV cameras were allowed in the Soviet Union because of Glasnost²¹ and we got to see the faces of the citizens, it was like, "Wait a minute, they're not the evil empire we imagined them to be."

T: So that juxtaposition was how Balalaika was born.

When you think of the mafia, you think of Hong Kong.

T: We can't talk about Balalaika without talking about Mr. Chang.

Hiroe: He was only a side character that appeared with the Council in the Twins arc, but he became such an important character soon after. I casually drew him exactly like Chow Yun-fat²² and then he took on a life of his own.

GX: So, the beef between him and Balalaika that gets mentioned later on didn't exist at this point?

Hiroe: I didn't expect him to become such an important character at first. I added that bit when I realized that he'd become one of the main characters later in the Twins arc.

T: Why did you make him a member of the Hong Kong mafia²³?

THERE ARE SO MANY INSTANCES OF “BUT IT DIDN’T WORK OUT THAT WAY” IN *BLACK LAGOON*.

We had all kinds of backstories for Lotton. Like he was a dual sword wielder.

GX: Next, the Counterfeit arc. The Japan arc was so serious, we wanted a B-movie type story.

T☆: And there are so many crazy killers that show up.

GX: Shenhua, who first appeared in the Takenaka arc, reappears. Sawyer and Lotton also appear for the first time.

T☆: Now we even have a spin-off for Sawyer. Can you tell us more about her?

Hiroe: She's the female version of Leatherface in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*²⁵. (LOL) There actually weren't many characters using chain saws in manga back then.

T☆: Not just that, she's a depressed goth chick.

Hiroe: And now we know it was her ex-boyfriend that gave her that scar on her throat thanks to Gen Urobuchi's *Gaiden*²⁶ novel. A friend of mine suffers from depression so her behavior is based on him. (LOL)

GX: What about Lotton?

Hiroe: The Japanese yakuza didn't stand a chance.

GX: Maybe Yukio had to choose death because of Balalaika. There are signs of us trying to keep Yukio alive in the anime version.

Hiroe: If Yukio was more violent than Balalaika, she might not have had to die. I would've liked to see that.

T☆: Ginji is so cool too.

Hiroe: Ginji is the stereotypical traditional Japanese yakuza. I always wanted to create a character like him.

T☆: I wonder if they would've gone after Balalaika in Roanapur if they had survived?

GX: But that never happened.

Hiroe: There are so many instances of “but it didn't work out that way” in *Black Lagoon*.

T☆: Is it safe to say the final scene at the airport is meant to show a change in Rock? The airport monitor showing “Welcome to Japan” felt so detached.

GX: Like it was no longer where Rock belonged. I love it, including that final scene. It felt like the first chapter of Rock's story was concluded.

LOSER'S HORIZON

GX: We initially wanted Shenhua to be kind of androgynous. But she ended up becoming a woman.

Hiroe: The trio of Shenhua, Sawyer, and Lotton are *Black Lagoon's* mascots. The three of them live together because Shenhua's such a caring person. I think they'll stay the way they are.

It's easy to assume right and wrong based on one's own subjectivity, but that's not how it works in the real world.

T☆: Now, finally, we reach the Roberta's Revenge arc. The heaviest arc so far.

GX: The TV anime was about to be released, so we wanted to introduce Roberta, a very popular character, again. Like a Hollywood sequel. It was that simple. But it didn't turn out that way, did it?

Hiroe: Who's the idiot that said it would be easy?!

T☆: At the time, as a reader, I wasn't sure where the story was headed.

Hiroe: The readers were split on it too. That still bugs me.

GX: Rock and Revy, the main characters, were challenged in that arc. It was Garcia that acted to stop the cycle of violence. Rock and Revy took advantage of that.

Hiroe: We had all kinds of backstories for Lotton. Like he was a dual sword wielder. But they were all thrown out. He became the man who resolves things without ever firing a single shot in Gen Urobuchi's *Gaiden*. He's the ultimate anticlimactic character. We introduced a handsome character because *Black Lagoon* didn't have many stylish characters that appealed to female readers, but just being handsome would've been boring so we made him clumsy. (LOL)

I got it from a lady who works at a Chinese restaurant in my neighborhood.

T: When Shenhua first made an appearance, she was an ally, but the next time she appears, she's been hired to kill them. It's very symbolic of Roanapur.

GX: Where did her way of speaking come from?

Hiroe: I got it from a lady who works at a Chinese restaurant in my neighborhood. (LOL) I didn't want her talking like a cliché Chinese character, so I came up with altering her phrasing. Junichi Inoue, who wrote *A Chinese Wife and an Otaku Husband*²⁷, said it sounded authentic. That made me happy.



would take to arrive at a resolution, so there were things we couldn't fully explore. Like Fabiola's childhood, which is similar to Revy's. We cut all of that out.

Hiroe: It does feel like a car crash. Like we entered something without really being prepared for it. It was an unsatisfying ending. Maybe that confused the readers. But in terms of the various points of view contained in *Black Lagoon*, I don't want to take sides. It's easy to assume right and wrong based on one's own subjectivity, but that's not how it works in the real world. If that's not reflected, then it becomes untruthful.

GX: Personally, I think it's fine for the readers to have different responses. I'm proud as an editor that we got to explore such a theme. It's not often that you get to write an impartial story of various points of view. I'm glad we did that arc.

Hiroe: But it emotionally scarred me! Personally, that was the conclusion of *Black Lagoon* season 1, in a sense. Season 2 exists only because it became popular. (LOL)

Feng is the female version of Rock.

T☆: Let's talk about the Feng arc which basically kicks off season 2.

Hiroe: Because the Roberta's Revenge arc was so challenging, I enjoyed the Feng arc. I wrote that arc because Rock's character had become so dark, I wanted to reexamine his role in the story.

GX: The fans' opinions on Fabiola—who resolved everything in the end and called Rock “the biggest piece of shit”—was also split. Readers who empathized with Rock and Revy must've been torn.

Hiroe: I could see that... The Roberta's Revenge arc was supposed to be a culmination of everything I wanted to achieve. So, to hear reader response was split was tough. It was also tough continuing the story without having a vision of a resolution. Combined with exhaustion and all the pressure I was under, it's what triggered the long-term hiatus.

GX: I thought the theme of ending the cycle of violence was thoroughly explored. Can't it be said that what made that story different from the other stories is that it wasn't the main character that ended the cycle?

Hiroe: It would all be over if Rock and Revy decided that violence wasn't a solution.

GX: Violence has been a lifelong theme for you, hasn't it? Maybe it revealed itself after writing the Twins and Japan arcs. Like you had to explore it.

Hiroe: I don't know... Maybe that's how I felt at the time, but looking back at it now, it was chaotic. I arrived at it while desperately writing it.

GX: We didn't know how the Roberta's Revenge arc was going to end. We were also worried about how long it



LOSER'S HORIZON

I shouldn't have forced myself! I want to say that from the bottom of my heart. Really!

GX: After *Black Lagoon* became a hit, I remember you saying you wanted to take your parents to Hawaii...

Hiroe: That never happened as a result of putting work first.

GX: In 2013, after a long hiatus, we met at a karaoke box and decided to talk about your hiatus in *Loser's Horizon*. Some people thought you got rich and lost your motivation. Even though you don't really earn enough to be set for life...

Hiroe: Speaking of that, you don't stop writing because you get rich. I wouldn't have become a manga artist if I wanted to be rich! I want to write manga. But after the Roberta arc, I was not in a place to continue writing *Black Lagoon*.

GX: We talked for three or four hours about a lot of things and decided to suspend the series.

T☆: I see.

Hiroe: I agreed to it at the time, but looking back now, I should've come out and said I was suffering from depression.

GX: Seeing harmful rumors on social media to this day makes me think we should've announced it...

T☆: That's a difficult decision... How did the serialization resume?

GX: We got an offer to write text for *Re: Creators* during the hiatus.

GX: You once said Feng is the female version of Rock. Like Rock, she was abandoned by the organization she belonged to. Did you make her a member of China's cyber division to reflect the times?

Hiroe: It was in the nineties when the PLA formed Unit 61398²⁸ and decided cyberwarfare would become the core of its military. I thought it was a plausible backstory.

T☆: And it was in the middle of the Feng arc that you suddenly ran out of gas.

Hiroe: Strictly speaking, I ran out of gas during the Roberta arc. I somehow managed to start the Feng arc, but I just couldn't do it anymore. I just suddenly couldn't keep going. It was like I paid the price for everything that had been building up.

GX: The sight of you mumbling to me that you couldn't keep going is still burned in my memory. You were in a really bad place. We both thought a two- or three-month break would fix things.

Hiroe: It didn't! There was a long gap between chapters while I was putting together volume 9 so I pushed myself, but that completely backfired. Some people thought I was being lazy.

GX: It probably didn't help that your father passed away around this time...

Hiroe: That happened when I was at my worst. I thought "I can't do it anymore!" But I still kept going for another six months. That was a big mistake!



BLACK LAGOON ITSELF IS A PRODUCT OF MY NAIVETÉ.

T☆: That was an unexpectedly heavy subject... Anything different about the series itself before and after the hiatus?

Hiroe: The script was done before we resumed, so there were no changes to the plot. Speaking of changes, the fact the art became fully digitized during the hiatus was the biggest change.

What I want to write about constantly changes.

T☆: And so, the latest arc, L'Homme Sombre, started last year. Where is *Black Lagoon* headed?

Hiroe: I don't know! What I want to write about constantly changes. People change after 20 years.

GX: You never intended to continue the series this long, did you?

Hiroe: I used to think it would conclude in about five years even after it was serialized.

T☆: Are you thinking it's about time to end it...?

GX: He was slowly able to work on drafts of manga other than *Black Lagoon*. We began working on *341 Sentodan*, which is serialized in *Monthly Shonen Sunday*, without knowing which magazine would publish it.

Hiroe: It was like rehab. I forced myself to put out *doujinshi* because not drawing would diminish my skills. I was even criticized for that!

T☆: I guess you can't go back to the way it was after coming back from a two- or three-year hiatus in any line of work...

Hiroe: Yeah. I was so fearful of resuming *Black Lagoon*. I thought I wouldn't be able to do it.

GX: As a firsthand observer, I can say that it's a miracle you're working again considering the state you were in right before going on hiatus. At the time, I thought you might never come back...

Hiroe: I'm still struggling with depression, so I can't write like I used to. If the same thing happens again, I don't think I'll ever be able to write again. That's why I can't push myself too hard.

GX: We both decided to resume serialization by agreeing not to push ourselves too hard.



LOSER'S HORIZON

T: Figure out how sloppy it'll be? (LOL)

GX: You need to stay young to put out sloppy manga.

Hiroe: You can't be sloppy when you're older. You lose momentum. *Black Lagoon* itself is a product of my naiveté. Not to compare it to Ado's "Useewa"¹²⁹, but you have to have the kind of spirit to write something like this. As you get older, you become more forgiving about the things taking place in the world.

GX: When *Black Lagoon* started, you were angry about a lot of things. But now all you say is you want to have a sauna. In that sense, you still are a loser. Keep on being a loser! You can still do it!

Hiroe: Having a sauna would be relaxing for me!

Black Lagoon will continue for a little while longer, so please stick with us!

Text/Composition: Sunday GX TAC

*From the April 2021 issue of *Monthly Sunday GX*.

GX: Early in its serialization, we talked for hours and decided on how *Black Lagoon* would end, but neither of us remembers what that was.

Hiroe: I wrote it down somewhere, but my handwriting is like hieroglyphics so I can't read it!

GX: I remember talking about it at a diner and it being a really cool ending! Now, I honestly can't remember what it was. (LOL)

T☆: You guys both suck!

Hiroe: I do think we've reached a point where we have to decide on an ending and work toward that. There's also the matter of how long it can continue. I guess we'll start building toward the end while hinting that it'll continue for a little while longer. I may not be able to do this as I get older, so my goal right now is to keep working toward the end. We also have to figure out what we'll do about the bonus manga at the end of each volume.

NOTES

*7 / Jugo Tsukuda

Novelist, writer. Co-wrote *Imasaredesuga Sorempo* with Rasenjin Hayami. Serving as the supervisor for Kunihiro Ikeda's *Kokkyou no Emilia* published in *Monthly Shonen Sunday*.

*5 / Blackwater

Blackwater USA. An American PMC founded by a former Navy SEAL in 1997. Grew rapidly during the Iraq War. Changed names several times amid scandals.

*6 / Seichi Shirato

Military and history researcher. Background researcher for many titles such as *Jormungand* and *Drifters*. Codirector of the anime *OBSOLETE* streaming on YouTube.

*3 / 1997

Return of Hong Kong to China, Kim Jong-il appointed General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, KAL Flight 801 crash, US rover lands on Mars, X-Japan breaks up.

*4 / Executive Outcomes

The first PMC (private military company) founded in South Africa in 1997. Mentioned in PW Singer's *Corporate Warriors*. Shares the same E.O. acronym as Extra Order appearing in *Black Lagoon*.

*1 / 1995

Year of the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake, Tokyo subway sarin attack, normalization of US-Vietnam diplomatic relations, launch of Amazon.com, and the arrest of Kevin Mitnick, who Benny references in the Counterfeit arc.

*2 / Movimiento Quinta República

Venezuela's Democratic Socialist Party formed in 1997. A coalition political party whose ideology includes humanitarianism, socialism, and nationalism.

***26 / Gen Urobuchi's Gaiden**

Black Lagoon spin-off novel published by Gagaga Bunko. Two titles, *Black Lagoon Shaitan Badi* and *Black Lagoon 2: Ballad of the Sinful Wizard* are currently available in Japanese.

***27 / Junichi Inoue**

Manga artist, illustrator, and tabletop RPG designer. His best-selling book *A Chinese Wife and an Otaku Husband* depicts his culture gap-filled marriage to Yue, a native of China. He has been active in the *doujinshi* scene under the name Keuma and is an old friend of Rei Hiroe.

***28 / PLA Unit 61398**

In 2011, the Chinese Defense Ministry admitted the existence of a cybersecurity squad. In addition, internet commentators have been publicly recruited since 2005 to spread propaganda and manipulate public opinion through mass postings on social media.

***29 / "Useewa"**

The first major-label release by high school girl singer Ado. Originally released as a limited-distribution single in October 2020. The song has become popular thanks to its catchy chorus and powerful lyrics. The words and music were written by Vocaloid producer syudou.

in Gorbachev's *Perestroika* movement. The press, which was under government control, was given more access and military secrets were made public.

***22 / Chow Yun-fat**

A Hong Kong actor who became a global star. In *A Better Tomorrow* (1986), he played Mark, the best friend of the main character Ho, who challenges the boss of the underworld. The stylish gunplay in the film changed the image of Hong Kong movies.

***23 / Hong Kong Mafia**

The Triad Society, believed to have originated from a dissident group opposing the Qing Dynasty, relocated its activities from mainland China to Hong Kong in 1950. The Triad has become a generic name for criminal organizations based in Hong Kong. With the expansion of the Chinese community, it has expanded its activities worldwide.

***24 / Year of the Dragon**

A 1985 film about a NYPD detective and Vietnam war veteran, played by Mickey Rourke, who confronts the Chinese mafia controlling Chinatown. The film explores the underworld that was born out of ethnic discrimination.

***25 / The Texas Chainsaw Massacre**

Set in rural Texas, this 1974 horror film depicts the Sawyer family's gruesome murderers. Their fourth son Bubba Sawyer, a.k.a. Leatherface, with his trademark chain saw, and his mask made from human skin, has become a horror icon.

***17 / Hisuikyokitan**

Rei Hiroe's commercial debut title. Set in 1935, an action-adventure story of Nazi Germany and the Imperial Japanese Army fighting over the goddess Kukulkan that awakened from a Mexican ruin. A two-volume special edition version has been released by Shogakukan. Kukulkan's rival character Grimalkin von Stieber is a Nazi SS colonel and a witch.

***18 / Red Dawn**

A 1984 war movie. The United States is invaded by the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Nicaragua after World War III erupts. A group of teenagers from a small town in Colorado flee into the mountains and conduct guerilla warfare against the invaders. Remade in 2012 with North Korea as the invaders.

***19 / Inside the Soviet Army**

Book by Viktor Suvorov. The Japanese edition was published in 1983. The author, who defected to England from Switzerland, was a Soviet GRU (main intelligence directorate) officer.

***20 / Spetsnaz**

Russia's special operations forces. Different branches of the Russian military have their own Spetsnaz units that conduct reconnaissance, subversive activities, and assassinations. Balalaika belonged to one of them in the Russian airborne forces.

***21 / Glasnost**

Means "openness and transparency" in Russian. A major policy included

***13 / The Shining**

A 1980 horror film directed by Stanley Kubrick based on a Stephen King novel. One of the strange phenomena occurring in the hotel where the story takes place includes twin sisters.

***14 / Soviet Union**

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Founded as a result of the victory by the Communist forces in 1922 after a series of civil wars beginning with the October Revolution in 1917. In 1991, after the fall of the Communist Party, countries forming the federation began declaring their independence. The federation was dissolved with President Gorbachev's resignation.

***15 / Russian Mafia**

Russian crime organizations which gained strength in the black markets of the Socialist-controlled former Soviet Union where there was a shortage of goods. Expanded overseas in the late 1980s. Many former KGB agents and veterans of the Afghan conflict are said to have joined in the early 1990s.

***16 / Battles Without Honor and Humanity**

A real-life yakuza film series based on the true-story novel *Battle Without Honor and Humanity: Hiroshima Yakuza: A Record of 20 Years of Bloodshed* by Koichi Iiboshi. The first film was released in 1973. The protagonist, Shozo Hirono, a veteran in Hiroshima after the war, rises up the ranks and expands his organization, but it crumbles due to internal strife.

***8 / Pink Flyers**

Sex-related business flyers. Phone booths were covered by these business card-sized flyers in the late 1980s to 1990s.

***9 / Nokia**

Finnish telecommunications company which began selling mobile phones in 1982. Thought of as the quintessential stylish mobile phone in the late nineties.

***10 / Cold War**

The conflict that divided the world post-World War II between the Western capitalist countries, including the United States and the Eastern Communist countries, which includes the Soviet Union. At a meeting in 1989, President Bush Sr. and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev declared the end of the conflict. However, the conflict still continues to this day in various forms.

***11 / The Original Fighting Maid**

The impression of maids in Japan's otaku scene stems from the 1986 adult OVA *Cream Lemon: Black Cat Manor*. However, the very first fighting maid can be traced back to *Steel Angel Kurumi* (1997). Roberta is often credited as the first character that combined the classic maid style with gunplay.

***12 / Kingsman: The Secret Service**

A 2014 action film about a secret spy organization using a high-end tailor shop as a front. One of the high-tech devices used by the characters in the film includes a Kevlar umbrella with a built-in shotgun.